THE MERRY-WEATHERS

LAURA·E·RICHARDS

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"'TU-WHOO!' SAID THE SNOWY OWL."

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BY

LAURA E. RICHARDS

AUTHOR OF "CAPTAIN JANUARY," "MELODY," "QUEEN HILDEGARDE," "GEOFFREY STRONG," ETC.

Illustrated by

JULIA WARD RICHARDS

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THE MERRYWEATHERS

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TO

H. H. F., Jr.

WITH AFFECTIONATE GREETING.

FOR REMEMBRANCE

The sunlight falls in gold upon the golden fields,
The ruffling wave gives back the sky in blue;
The asters fringe the meadow's skirts in purple pride,
And proud the goldenrod is standing, too.

Oh! clear and far across the lonely water,
The wild bird calls his mate at close of day;
My heart cries out, my heart cries out in answer,
And oh, I fondly think of them that's far away.

Oh, fair the fields where now their feet are treading!
Oh, green the trees that blossom o'er their head!
Oh, deep and sweet the skies above them spreading,
And on their hearth the fire-glow warm and red!

Still may they hear, across the lonely water,
The wild bird call his mate at close of day;
Still may their hearts, still may their hearts make answer;
Still may they kindly think of them that's far away!

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THE MERRYWEATHERS

CHAPTER I.

THE ARRIVAL

"Oh, Peggy, I am afraid!"

"Why, Margaret!"

"Yes, I am. I feel very shy and queer, going among strangers. You see, I have never really been away in my life; never in this way, I mean. I was always with father; and then — afterward — I went to Fernley; and though so many people have come into my life, dear, delightful people, I have never somehow gone into theirs. And now, to go into a whole great big family, only two of whom — I mean which — oh, dear me! I don't know what I mean,

but I have only seen two of them, you know, and it is formidable, you will admit, Peggy."

"Well, I feel just a scrap queer myself," said Peggy; "but I never thought you would. And anyhow, we needn't; we both know the boys so well, and though you have not actually seen the Snowy, you really know her very well. Darling thing! Oh, I cannot wait till we get there! Do you think we ever *shall* get there, Margaret? This is the longest journey I ever made in my life."

"How about the journey from Ohio?"

"Oh, that is different. I know all the places along the road, and they slip by before one can think. Besides, a long journey always seems shorter, because you know it is long. Well, you needn't laugh, you know perfectly well what I mean. Oh, Margaret, I saw a glimpse of blue behind the trees. Do you suppose that is the lake? do you think we are nearly there? Oh! I am so excited! Is my hat on straight?"

Margaret Montfort, by way of reply, straightened her cousin's hat, and then proceeded to administer sundry coaxing pats to her hair and her ribbons.

"You are a trifle flyaway, dear!" she said. "There! now, when you have taken the black smut off your nose, you will be as trim as possible. Am I all right?"

"You!" said Peggy, with a despairing look, as she rubbed away at her nose; "as if you ever had a pin or an eyelash out of place! Margaret, how *do* you do it? Why does dust avoid you, and cling to me as if I were its last refuge? How do you make your collar stay like that? I don't see why I was born a Misfit Puzzle. Oh—ee! there *is* the lake! just look, how blue it is! Oh! Margaret, I *must* scream!"

"You must *not* scream!" said Margaret with quiet decision, pulling Peggy down into the seat beside her. "You must be good, and sit still. See! that old gentleman is

watching us, Peggy. He will be scandalized if you carry on so."

"He doesn't look a bit scandalized; he looks awfully jolly."

"Peggy!"

"Well, he does, Margaret. Do you suppose Mr. Merryweather is anything like that? *Margaret!*"

"What is it, Peggy? *please* don't speak so loud!"

"Perhaps it *is* Mr. Merryweather. I think —I am almost perfectly sure it must be. Why, he is positively staring at us. It *must* be Mr. Merryweather!"

"Is Mr. Merryweather specially addicted to staring? I should not suppose so. This gentleman is not in the least my idea of Mr. Merryweather; and if he does stare,— there! he is looking away now,—it is because he sees a great big girl dancing and jumping in her seat as if she were Polly Peppercorn."

"Next station Merryweather!" chanted the brakeman.

"There! Margaret, he is getting his things together. It is! it *is*, I tell you. Oh! I *shall* scream!"

Peggy's threat was uttered in so loud a stage whisper, that Margaret looked up in alarm, fearing that the gentleman must have heard. She met a glance so kind, so twinkling with sympathetic merriment, that she smiled in spite of herself.

The gentleman lifted his hat, instantly, and stepped forward. He was not tall, but broad and muscular, with keen, dark eyes that sparkled under shaggy white eyebrows; a most vigorous, positive-looking old gentleman.

"A thousand pardons!" he said, in a deep, gruff voice which was the very essence of heartiness. "You also are getting off at Merryweather, young ladies? I beg the privilege of assisting you with your parcels; I

insist upon it! Permit me, madam!" and he took possession of Margaret's travelling-bag, Margaret blushing and protesting, while Peggy's blue eyes grew to absolute circles, and her little mouth opened to another.

"You are very kind!" said Margaret. "Indeed, I can carry it perfectly — thank you so very much! Yes, we are going to Mr. Merryweather's camp. Do you know — "

"Harry Monmouth!" exclaimed the old gentleman. "Astonishing! Going there myself. Permit me to introduce myself — Colonel Ferrers, at your service."

He lifted his hat again, and bowed low.

"Our name is Montfort," said Margaret timidly, attracted and yet alarmed by his explosive utterance, so different from the quiet speech of the Montfort men.

"Not John's daughters!" cried the Colonel. "I'll be shot if you are John's daughters!"

"Oh! no," cried Margaret, her eyes light-

ening. "Not his daughters, but his nieces. Do you know Uncle John, Colonel Ferrers?"

"Know John Montfort? know the nose on my face? not that there is any resemblance; fine-looking man. I have known John Montfort, my dear young ladies, ever since he was in petticoats. John, Dick, Jim, Roger — fine lads! used to stay at Roseholme — my place in Dutchess County — forty years ago. Schoolboys when I was in college. All over the place, climbing, hunting, fishing, falling off the roofs — great boys! haven't heard of them for twenty years. Where are they now? all living, I — eh, what?"

"My father, Roger Montfort, is dead," said Margaret, softly; "so is Uncle Richard. Uncle John and Uncle James are living, Colonel Ferrers; this is Uncle James's daughter. Peggy dear, Colonel Ferrers! and I live with Uncle John at Fernley House. Oh! how delightful to meet some one who knows Uncle John!"

"Pleasure is mine, I assure you!" said the Colonel, gallantly. "Harry Monmouth! takes me back forty years. Knew Roger, your father, well, Miss Montfort. Great scholar; fine fellow! nose in his books all day long, just like my brother Raymond; great chums, Roger and Raymond. I remember once — ha! here we are!"

"Merryweather!" shouted the brakeman. The train drew up beside a little wayside station. On one side of the track, a platform and a shed, with a few barrels and boxes lying about; on the other, a long stretch of dark blue water, ruffling into brown where the wind swept it.

The three travellers, emerging, found three persons awaiting them on the platform. Gerald Merryweather was first, his hand on the rail, his face alight with joy and eagerness; close beside him was another person, a tall girl in gray, at sight of whom Peggy, who had been apparently stricken dumb by the

aspect of Colonel Ferrers, shouted aloud and tumbled off the car-step, to the imminent peril of life and limb.

"Snowy! Snowy! is it really you?"

"You dear Peggy!" cried Gertrude Merryweather, taking her in her arms, and giving her a hearty kiss. "I am *so* glad! and this is Margaret — oh! welcome, most welcome, to Merryweather! Dear Colonel Ferrers, how do you do? it was so good of you to come! But where is Hugh? haven't you brought him?"

Colonel Ferrers drew her a step aside.

"My dear Gertrude," he said, in a confidential tone, "there is no need of my telling *you* that Hugh is one of the most astonishing — I will say *the* most astonishing boy I ever saw in my life. Expected to come; looking forward to it for weeks, greatest pleasure of the summer. Yesterday morning, Elizabeth Beadle had an attack of lumbago; painful thing; confined to her bed; excellent

woman, none better in the world. Never could understand why good people should have lumbago; excellent complaint for scoundrels; excellent! well, the boy — his great-aunt, you understand! — refuses to leave her. Says she likes to have him read to her! Preposterous! I insisted, Elizabeth Beadle insisted, with tears in her eyes; tears, sir! I mean my dear! Boy immovable; Gibraltar vacillating beside him; tottering, sir, on its foundations. I had to come away and leave him, perfectly happy, reading Tennyson to Elizabeth Beadle. Ask somebody else to coerce a boy like that; Thomas Ferrers is not the man for it. Where's my Cochin China Chittagong?"

"Jack?" said Gertrude, laughing. "He is behind the shed, with the horses. The old horse doesn't like the train, and will not stand tying. As soon as Jerry gets the trunks —"

"Checks?" cried the Colonel, in answer to Gerald's request. "Two of them, sir. Sole-leather trunk, green carpet-bag. Anything for

me by express? box, hamper, basket, that sort of thing, eh, what?"

"I should think there was, sir!" said Gerald. "A basket of peaches as big as the camp, or very near it; and a hamper that says 'salmon!' as plainly as if it could speak. You're awfully good, sir!"

"Nothing of the sort!" retorted the Colonel. "Pity if I can't have a little gratification once in a way. Ah! there is my Cochin China — how are you, sir, how are you? prancing, as usual, like an Egyptian war-horse. Come here, and be introduced to the Miss Montforts! We are in luck, sir! Miss Montfort, Miss — eh? thank you! Miss Peggy Montfort, my nephew, John Ferrers. Here sir! take the bags, will you? Which way, Gerald? eh? what?"

While the colonel was explaining (and exploding) to Gerald and Gertrude, and Margaret looking and listening in quiet amusement, Peggy had been hanging back, overcome in

her turn by the shyness which her companion had conquered. But now Gertrude took her by the hand, and while the trunks were being hoisted on the wagon by Gerald and Jack, aided by a tall and powerful lad in blue overalls, the two walked up and down the little platform in earnest talk. Fragments of it reached Margaret where she stood, as they passed and repassed.

"Yes, last week. She is very well, she says, and fluffier than ever, on account of the heat. She has enjoyed her school very much. She wanted Grace to join her, and I think she might have, if all this had not come about. Oh, Peggy, I was so glad!"

"Blissful, my dear, is no word for it! they have no eyes for any one else. He can't remember that there *is* any one else, and she —"

"Well, I always said that if Grace did care for any one —"

"Yes, in October. The wedding is to be at Fernley, and —"

"Anybody coming with me?" inquired Gerald, wistfully. "Margaret, will you risk life and limb with me and the old horse?"

"With pleasure!" said Margaret. "Is he very wild? He doesn't look so."

"Only by comparison with the young horse!" said Gerald. "Jacob, don't strain your back lifting that carpet-bag!"

Jacob, the youth in blue overalls, smiled calmly, and swung a large trunk over his shoulder as if it were a hand-satchel.

"It's you I'm scared about, Gerald," he said slowly; "fear you'll do yourself a hurt pulling on the reins. Frank hasn't been out since yesterday."

"I'll risk him!" said Gerald. "Now, Margaret." He held out his hand, and Margaret stepped lightly up to the seat of the Concord wagon.

"Now," said Gerald, "Jack, if you'll drive the beach-wagon — is that all right, Toots?"

"Certainly!" said Gertrude. "Peggy, you and I will sit together behind; that is, if you do not mind the front seat, Colonel Ferrers? So! all right now, Jack! we'd better let the old horse go first, for he doesn't like to stay behind the new one. Oh! Jacob! how are you going home? we must make room for you somewhere."

"I'll go across lots," said the blue youth, "and be there to take the horses when you get there. You better hurry them up the least mite, so's I sha'n't have to wait too long!"

With a benign smile he vaulted over a five-barred gate, and went with a long, leisurely stride across the fields.

"He'll run when he gets round the corner!" said Gerald. "I know that's the way he does it. Get up, Frank! do *play* you are alive, just for once. Oh, Margaret, I am so glad to see you. I thought September would never come. It has been the longest

summer I ever knew. Haven't you found it so?"

"Why, no!" said truthful Margaret. "It has seemed very short to me."

"Oh, well, of course it has been short too, summers always are; like the dachshund!"

"The dachshund!" repeated Margaret. "What can a dachshund have to do with summer, Gerald?"

"A description I once heard," said Gerald. "I was walking with Beppo, my dachs, and a little boy stopped to look at him. 'Ain't he long?' he said. 'My! ain't he short?' Even so summer. Oh, I *am* glad to see you. Get up, Frank!"

CHAPTER II.

THE CAMP

A LONG, low, irregular building, with a wide verandah in front, the lake rippling and ruffling almost up to the piers; beyond, great hills rolling up and away. To right and left, boat-houses and tents; hammocks swung between the trees, fishing-rods ranged along the sides of the building. This was the Camp. As the wagons drove up, Mrs. Merryweather hurried from the house, and Mr. Merryweather and Phil came up with long strides from the wharf. Amid a chorus of eager welcome, a babel of questions and answers, the travellers were helped out and escorted to the verandah.

"Most welcome, all!" cried Mrs. Merryweather. "Are you very tired? No? that is good! Well, but you must be hungry, I am

sure. There are doughnuts and milk on the table; or if you would rather have tea —"

"They are not hungry, Miranda!" said Mr. Merryweather. "They cannot be hungry at three o'clock. Dined at Wayport, Ferrers? Of course! Jack, show your uncle his tent! Miss Montfort —"

"I'll show them the way, Papa!" said Gertrude. "Where is Bell, Mammy? Oh, there she is! Bell, here are Margaret and Peggy; girls, this is Bell!"

Bell Merryweather, a sturdy, blue-eyed girl with the general aspect of a snow apple, greeted the guests with a hearty shake of a powerful hand, and a cordial smile.

"We have been looking forward so to your coming!" she said. "Don't you want to come out to your tent? Here, I'll take your bag, Margaret; shall I say 'Margaret' at once? it will be so much nicer. This way!"

She led the way, Margaret following, Gertrude and Peggy after them, still talk-

ing eagerly. A row of flagstones led past the boat-house, and on under solemn pines and feathery birches to where a line of tents stood facing the water.

"Here is yours," said Bell; "next to ours, this big one; we are three, you see. Yours is small, but I hope you can be comfortable."

"Comfortable!" echoed Peggy; "I should think so! Oh, Margaret, do look! how perfect everything is! Oh, what ducky beds! the red blankets are just like home; our boys have red blankets. Oh, I shall be perfectly happy here!"

Margaret, accustomed to the wide spaces and ample closets of Fernley House, was a little bewildered at the first glance around her. The tent was hardly bigger than the stateroom of a moderate-sized steamer. Could two persons live here in anything approaching comfort? A second glance showed her how compactly and conveniently everything was arranged. The narrow cots, with their scar-

"'HERE IS YOURS,' SAID BELL; 'NEXT TO OURS.'"

let blankets and blue check pillows, stood on either side; between them was a table, with blotter of birch bark, and an inkstand made by hollowing out a quaintly shaped piece of wood and sinking in the hollow a small glass tumbler. Above the head of each bed hung a long shoe-bag with many pockets, while opposite the foot were rows of hooks for dresses, a shelf on which stood pitcher, basin, etc., and a chest of drawers. All was fresh, neat, and tidy.

"Yes, I am sure we shall be happy!" said Margaret, repeating Peggy's words.

"Here is the hook for your lantern," said Bell. "Here is a little jar for crackers, but be sure to keep it covered, or the squirrels will carry them off. I hope you will not mind a squirrel coming in now and then? they are so tame, they come hopping in to see if we have anything for them; I often leave a bit of something."

"Oh! what fun!" said Peggy. "I love to tame squirrels. Ours at home will come

and eat from our hands. Will yours do that?"

"Not often; at least, not for me. The boys can bring them sometimes. I think they like boys best. But I have a dear little field-mouse who brings me her babies to look at now and then, just to show me how they are growing. There, now, we go on chattering, when I know you ought to rest awhile, and unpack and stow away. It takes quite a bit of planning for two persons to fit into a tent. By and by, when you are all settled, would you like to go out on the water? Hurrah! we'll come for you. Come on, Toots!"

The two sisters walked slowly down the long slip that led to the floating wharf, and sat down with their feet hanging over the edge.

"Well, Bell!" said Gertrude, eagerly.

"Well!" said Bell, slowly.

"What do you think of them? Isn't she lovely? and isn't Peggy a dear?"

"Yes," said Bell. "I think you have just hit it, Toots. Peggy is a dear; just a hearty, jolly dear; but Margaret is lovely. Do you see a little hint of Hilda? I can't tell where it is; not in the features, certainly, nor in the coloring. I think it is in the brow and eyes; a kind of noble look; I don't know how else to put it. You wouldn't say anything false or base to this girl, any more than you would to Hilda; you wouldn't dare. My lamb! I speak as if falseness and baseness were the usual note of your conversation."

"I thought you were a trifle severe," said Gertrude, smiling. "Well, anyhow, it is a joy to have them here, and dear Colonel Ferrers, too. What shall we do this evening? Here come the boys for a council."

The twins, Gerald and Phil, came running down the wharf, followed by Jack Ferrers. The latter, whom some of my readers may have known as an awkward, "leggy" boy, was now a man. Very tall, towering three or

four inches above the six-foot Merryweathers, he still kept his boyish slenderness and spring, though the awkward angles were somehow softened away. He no longer stooped and shambled, but held his head up and his shoulders back; and if he did still prance, as his uncle declared, like the Mighty Ones of Scripture, it was not an ungraceful prancing. Briefly, Jack Ferrers was a fine-looking fellow.

"Council of War?" asked Gerald; "or do we intrude?"

"Sit down!" said Bell. "We were just beginning to plan the evening. What are your ideas, if any?"

The boys — for they were still the boys, even if they had passed one and twenty — stretched themselves along the wharf in picturesque attitudes.

"I would sing!" announced Gerald. "Prose will not express my feelings at this juncture.

"My fertile brain is simmering,
My fancy's fire is glimmering;
I'd fain betake
Me to the lake,
When bright the moonlight's shimmering.

"Your turn, Ferguson. Go on; the song upraise!"

"Let me see!" said Phil. "Well — on the whole —

"I can't agree with himmering;
My fancy's fire is dimmering;
If you would know
The thing I'd doe,
Methinks I'll go a swimmering."

"Oh! no, Phil," said Gertrude. "Not the very first night the girls are here; it will take them a day or two to get used to camp ways, Margaret at least; and we want to do something all together, something that Colonel Ferrers will like, too. I think —"

"Sing it! sing it!" cried Gerald. "The song upraise, Tintinnabula! no escape! 'Trimmering' is still left you."

"Is there only one vowel?" demanded Bell, laughing. "I refuse to be fettered. Wait a second! — now I have it.

"Forbear, forbear your clamoring,
And cease this hasty hammering;
I think, with Jerry,
'Twere wise and merry
To row by moonlight glamouring.

Your turn, Toots!"

"I cannot!" said Gertrude. "You know I cannot, Bell. Besides, there aren't any more rhymes."

"Oh!" cried Gerald, "you know what you are telling, and you know what happens to people who tell them. Perpend, Tootsina!

"You yodel, yodel yammering,
You stutter, stutter stammering;
And when you cry,
'I will not try!'
We know you're only shammering."

"Gracious!" said Gertrude. "Don't you suppose I would make rhymes if I could? It's

really a dreadful thing to be the only prose member of a large family. But Jack comforts me; you can't make them either, can you, Jack?"

"Not to save my life!" said Jack. "Never could see how they do it."

"But you can set them to music!" said Gertrude. "That is the delightful thing about you."

"And you can illustrate them! That is one of the many delightful things about you!" said Jack, with a low bow.

> "'They built it up for forty miles,
> With mutual bows and pleasing smiles!'"

quoted Gerald. "A truce to this badinage! Compliment, unless paid to myself, wearies me. We go, then, in canoes?"

"In canoes!" replied the others in chorus.

"'Tis well! Any special stunts in the way of arrangement?"

"Oh!" said Jack, "in plain prose — Bell,

will you come with me? It's our turn to get supper, isn't it? and I have an idea — just a little one — which we can talk over while we are getting it."

"Oh, guard it, guard it tenderly,
Thy one idea — thy first!"

sang Gerald.

"And we, the while, console ourselves;
'Twill be the last, at worst!

Nay! nay!" he went on, as Jack seized him by the shoulders, and made a motion toward the water.

"Duck not the bard, the tuneful bard,
Who all thy soul reveals;
To hear the truth, I own, is hard,
Yet dry thy tearful squeals!"

"False construction!" said Bell. "You cannot dry squeals."

"They were tearful ones!" Gerald protested. "It was the tears I would have dried.

Tears, idle tears, I know not whence they come; tears from the depth of some despairing fiddler."

"Suppose you dry *up!*" said Jack, dipping Gerald's head lightly in the water.

"No ducking between swims!" proclaimed Phil. "Law of the Medes and Persians!"

"Besides, it is time to be making the fire!" said Bell, rising. "Leave him to his conscience, Jack, and come along!"

"Yes, leave me to me conscience!" said Gerald.

> "'Twill cradle me with songs of Araby;
> Arrah be aisy! hear it sing to me!"

"Jerry, what *has* got into you?" asked Gertrude, a few minutes later, when Phil had followed the others to the house, leaving the two Reds, as their mother called them, together. "Has the rhyming spider bitten you? you are really wild!"

"Nice little sister!" said Gerald, rolling

over, and resting his head on Gertrude's knee. "Nice little red-haired, cream-colored, comfortable sister! If I were as good-looking as you, Toots, who knows? As it is — but still I am happy, my child, happy! I say! Toots!"

"Yes, Jerry!"

"What do you think of her?"

"Oh, Jerry, she is a darling!"

"*Dixisti!*" cried Gerald. "Thou hast spoken."

CHAPTER III.

AUF DAS WASSER ZU SINGEN

"HARRY MONMOUTH!" said Colonel Ferrers. "This is pleasant. Merryweather, you are a lucky dog!" As he spoke, he looked around him, and repeated, "A lucky dog, sir!"

The horn had just blown for supper, three long blasts, and already the campers were in their places at the long table, with its shining white cover. Mr. and Mrs. Merryweather, their six children, Bell, Gertrude, and Kitty, Gerald, Philip, and Willy, the two Montforts, with the Colonel and his nephew, made a party of twelve, and filled the table comfortably, though there was still room for more. The room was a long one, with a vast open fireplace stretching half across one side. At one end were rows of book-shelves, filled to

overflowing; at the other, the walls were adorned with models for boats, sketches in water-color and pen and ink, birds' nests, curious fungi, and all manner of odds and ends. It was certainly a cheerful room, and so Miles Merryweather thought, as his eyes followed the Colonel's.

"We like it!" he said, simply. "It suits us, the place and the life. It's good for young and old both, to get away from hurry and bustle, and live for a time the natural life."

"Nature, sir!" said the Colonel. "Nature! that's it; nothing like it! When I was a lad, young men were sent abroad, after their school or college course; the grand tour, Paris, Vienna, that sort of thing: very good thing in its way, too, monstrous good thing. But before he sees the world, sir, a lad should know how to live, as you say, the natural life. Ought to know what a tree is when he sees it; upon my soul, he ought. Now my

milksop — best fellow in the world, I give you my word, except that little fellow at home there — well, sir! when he came to me, he didn't know the difference between an oak and an elm, give you my word he didn't. Remember one day — he heard me giving directions to Giuseppe about cutting some ashes — clump of them in the field below the house, needed thinning out — and he wanted to know how ashes could be cut; thought I meant those in the fireplace, sir. Monstrous! Well, I taught him a little, and you and your young folks have taught him a great deal. H'm! I don't know that he is now more disgracefully ignorant than nine-tenths of the young men of his age. Set of noodles! I'll tell you what, Merryweather! You ought to have a kind of summer school here: get other boys, a dozen, two dozen; teach 'em to see with their eyes, and all the rest of it. I knew a boy once who thought a bat was a bird, give you my word I did. And another

who thought oysters grew on bushes. Get up a school, sir, and I'll come myself, and be a boy again."

"That is a great inducement," said Mr. Merryweather, laughing: "but, Colonel, I hope you have brought a boy's appetite with you, at least. Who are the cooks to-night, Miranda? Oh, I see; Bell and Jack. Well, that is all right, Colonel; they make one of our best combinations. What have you there, Jack?"

Jack, in a white cap, and an apron reaching not quite half-way to his knees, advanced bearing a mighty dish, from which rose fragrant steam.

"H'm! ha!" said the Colonel, sniffing. "Smells good! you had no hand in this, I'll be bound, sir!"

"Indeed, Colonel Ferrers," said Bell, who followed with the teapot and a plate piled high with feathery rolls, "it is all Jack's doing, every bit. It is his famous pilaff, that

the old Greek professor taught him to make in Germany; and it is almost the best thing you ever tasted in your life."

"H'm!" said the Colonel, frowning heavily, and looking immensely pleased. "So this is what he was doing while he was supposed to be studying. I always knew the rascal was deceiving me. Ha! it *is* good; it's uncommon good! So you did learn something besides fiddling, eh, Jack?"

"Cooking is a part of chemistry, Uncle," said Jack, soberly; "a very important part. This dish is chemically prepared, sir; please regard it as a demonstration!"

"And please try my fried potatoes as a further demonstration!" said Bell. "Margaret, you are not eating anything."

"She never does!" said Peggy.

"Oh!" cried Margaret, "but I never ate so much before. Oh, please not!" as Phil tried to heap her plate with potatoes. "They are delicious, but I really cannot!"

"I can!" said Gertrude, holding out her plate.

"I'll warrant you!" said Phil. "No one doubted that, sweet Chuck!"

"We do not look for the Camp Appetite till after twenty-four hours," said Mrs. Merryweather. "Give Margaret time! in two days she will eat twice as much as she does now."

"Harry Monmouth!" exclaimed the Colonel. "At that rate, it is fortunate for you all that I do not outstay my two days. Twice as much as I am eating now would clear your larder, dear madam. Yes, thanks, Merryweather, a little more!"

"Oh, Colonel Ferrers!"

"Oh, Uncle Tom! you are not going away in two days? We counted on a week at least!" cried all in chorus.

"Impossible, dear people, impossible! Like nothing better; enchanted to stay all summer; delightful place. But — Elizabeth Beadle's condition, you understand; and the boy — I

must get back. He is too young to have the responsibility. Most amazing boy in the world; I haven't the slightest doubt that he is doing her more good than all the doctors in the world — parcel of fools, mostly — but still he is too young; I must get back."

"Let me go, Uncle!" said Jack.

"Or me, Colonel Ferrers!" cried Gertrude. "Any one of us would love to go!"

The Colonel beamed on them with his kindliest smile, but shook his head resolutely. "Thanks! thanks!" he said, heartily. "Good children! kind and thoughtful children! but I must go. Couldn't be easy, you understand."

"The fact is," said Jack, "Uncle Tom cannot be comfortable for more than twenty-four hours away from Hugh. After that length of time he becomes restive, and symptoms develope which —"

"Hold your tongue, sir!" cried the Colonel. "Nothing of the sort, sir! Mrs. Merry-

weather, I hoped you were teaching this fellow better manners. Symptoms, indeed! You have seen no symptoms in me, of anything except pure pleasure — pleasure in everything except the gabbling of a goose!"

"Surely not, dear friend!" said Mrs. Merryweather, laughing. "But all the same, I think I should not try to detain you when once you had made up your mind that Hugh needed you."

"All against me!" cried the Colonel. "'The little dogs and all' — I beg ten thousand pardons, my dear madam; you know the quotation! Well," he added, his face changing suddenly as he turned to Mrs. Merryweather and spoke in a lower tone, "fortunate old fellow, eh? to have one young face — two, perhaps, for my Giraffe loves me too — brighten when one comes. Ah! you, with all your wealth — richest woman of my acquaintance, give you my honor! — cannot tell what these boys mean to me. Hilda, too:

most astonishing how I miss that child! but all your young people are so good to me —"

"Colonel!" cried Gertrude from the other end of the table. "Will you come with me in my canoe after tea?"

"Will I?" cried the Colonel. "Won't I? Lead the way, my dear!"

The young moon shone bright; the lake lay a broad sheet of luminous black, with a silver path stretching across it. Four canoes lay beside the wharf, and the campers were taking their places. In the birch canoe, the original *Cheemaun*, Mrs. Merryweather was going as passenger, with her husband and Phil at bow and stern; in the *Nahma* was Colonel Ferrers, with Gertrude and Peggy; Kitty and Willy in the *Rob Roy*, Gerald and Margaret in the *Wenonah*.

"All ready?" asked the chief. "Where shall we go? Where are Jack and Bell?"

"Oh, they started ahead," said Phil. "They

had some stunt on hand, and we are to meet them over by the Black Shore."

"Ready — give way all!"

The paddles dipped, the canoes shot out along the silver path, gliding swift and silent as spirits. For a time no one spoke. The *Cheemaun*, with the powerful arms at either end, took the lead and kept it easily: next came the *Nahma* and the *Rob*, nearly abreast, and vying with each other; but the *Wenonah* lagged behind, and seemed in no special hurry.

"Like it?" asked Gerald, presently.

"Oh!" said Margaret, softly.

Gerald gave a little grunt of content, and was silent again. The paddle dipped noiseless in the liquid silver, the dark prow crept noiseless along the shining way.

"It is another world!" said Margaret presently, still speaking under her breath. "I never dreamed of anything like it. A silver world! Oh!"

"What is it?"

"Nothing — I was only thinking — one ought to be very good, to live in a world so beautiful as this, Gerald!"

"Some of us are, Margaret!"

Silence again.

"I'm awfully glad you like it!" said Gerald. "I hoped you would. I've — I've been looking forward all summer to your coming."

"I was very glad to come," said Margaret, simply. "I was afraid, but I was glad, too."

"Afraid? I should like to know what you were afraid of!"

"Oh — I don't know! I have never been with many people, you know. I have never seen a large family together before. How happy you all are!"

"That's what we are!" said Gerald. "Especially now! I say, Margaret! the child Toots has fallen a victim."

"Fallen a — what do you mean, Gerald? not into the water?"

"Charms!" said Gerald. "Yours. Bowled her over completely. Nice child, the child Toots. Think so?"

"I think she looks as good as she is beautiful," said Margaret. "Does she really like me? I am very glad, for I know I shall love her."

"Don't you think she is the image of me?" asked Gerald, plaintively.

"No, I never thought of it!" said downright Margaret. "Oh! hark, Gerald; what is that? I hear music."

They listened. Directly in front of them lay a deep black shadow, and forth from this shadow stole notes of music, low, sweet, almost unearthly in their purity and clearness.

"Evidently the stunt of Tintinnabula and the Camelopard!" said Gerald. "That is the Black Shore yonder, and the noise is that

of the Tree-browser's fiddle, in sooth a goodly noise. Approach we along the moonglade! that is what we call the wake here. Pretty?"

"Lovely!" murmured Margaret. "Oh! but hush, and listen!"

The other canoes had slackened their speed, and now all four crept on abreast over the luminous water. From the black shadow ahead forms began to detach themselves, black rocks, dark trees stooping to the water's edge, fir and pine, with here and there a white birch glimmering ghostlike; and still the music rose, ever clearer and sweeter, thrilling on the silent air. It seemed no voice of anything made by man; it was as if the trees spoke, the rocks, the water, the very silence itself. But now — now another tone was heard; a human voice this time, a full, rich contralto, blending with the aerial notes of the violin.

"Over all the mountains is peace;
Among the tree-tops
Hardly a breath is stirring;

The birds are silent,
Silent in the woodland;
Only wait! only wait!
Soon thou too shalt rest."

"Harry Monmouth!" murmured the Colonel under his breath. "Am I alive, or is this the gate of Heaven?"

"Oh! who is it?" whispered Margaret.

"Tintinnabula! rather a neat thing in voices, the Tintinnabula's. Nor does the song altogether excite to strenutation. Ah! but that is the best yet!"

The notes changed. It was Schubert's Serenade now that rose from voice and violin together. No one stirred. The canoes were now close inshore, and the long, soft fingers of fir and cedar brushed Margaret's cheek as she sat motionless, spellbound. It was a world of soft darkness, black upon black: the silver world they had just left seemed almost garish as she looked back on it. Here in the cool shadow, the voices of the night pouring

forth their wonderful melody — "Oh!" she thought; "if this might last forever!"

But it was over. Floating round a great rock that stretched far out from the shore, they came upon the musicians, their canoe drawn up close to the rock.

"Here they are!" cried Willy. "It's Bell and Jack, Kitty; I knew it was. You are such a silly!"

"I don't care!" pouted Kitty. "It did sound like nymphs; I am sure that is just the way they sound."

"You are quite right, Kitty," said her mother. "Children, you have given us a great treat. May we not have some more?"

"Oh, we were only waiting for you," said Bell; "now we must have choruses, many of them!"

And lying close together, the paddles stretched across from one canoe to another, the Merryweathers sang, to Jack's accom-

paniment, song after song in chorus: German student songs, with merry refrain of "*vivallera la*," and "*juch heira sa sa!*" Scottish ballads and quaint old Highland boat-songs; till Mr. Merryweather declared that it was time to go home.

So home they went, down the moonglade once more, across the glimmering floor of the lake, singing as they went; till, twinkling through the fringe of trees, they saw the lights of the Camp, and the long outline of the float, and the boats swinging at their moorings.

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER THE PICNIC

"AND what comes next on the programme?" asked the Chief.

"Coma, I should say," replied Colonel Ferrers. "After that watermelon, I see nothing else for it. It's my avowed belief that my nephew there could not stir if his life depended on it; it stands to reason. The boy has eaten more than his own weight. Monstrous!"

"What a frightful calumny!" cried Jack, laughing. "Really, Uncle Tom, you cannot expect me to sit still under that."

He rose lightly to his feet, and grasping a branch of the tree above his head, drew himself up, and after kicking his long legs several times in the air, finally twisted them round

the branch, and in another moment had disappeared in the shadowy depths of the great hemlock.

"Oh! I say!" his voice floated down. "This is a great tree to climb. You'd better come up, Uncle Tom, if you feel the slightest symptoms of coma."

The other lads did not wait to be invited, but flung themselves at the tree, and were soon lost to sight, though not to sound. Colonel Ferrers turned to his hostess with a frown which tried hard not to turn into a smile.

"Now, did you ever hear of such impudence as that?" he asked. "These young fellows of to-day are the most impudent scoundrels I ever came across. Time was, though, when we could have climbed a tree with the best of them; eh, Merryweather?"

"I have no doubt you could now, Colonel," said his host, "if you were put to it; but I confess it is more comfortable under a tree

than in it, nowadays, especially after a Gargantuan feast like this."

It had indeed been a great picnic. The boys, while on a tramp, had discovered a grove of pines and hemlocks, huge old trees, which had unaccountably escaped the woodman's axe. The pines shot up straight and tall for a hundred feet and more, their trunks seamed and scarred, their clouds of dusky green plumes tossing far overhead ; the hemlocks were no less massive in girth, but they were twisted into all manner of grotesque shapes, and their feathery branches hung low, making a dense canopy over the heads of the picnickers. Here, under one of these hemlocks, the cloth had been laid, and decorated with ferns and hemlock tassels. Then the baskets were unpacked, and the campers feasted as only dwellers in the open air can feast. Ham and pasty, sandwiches and rolls, jam and doughnuts — nothing seemed to come amiss ; and they finished off with a

watermelon of such mighty proportions that it took all the united energies of the boys to dispose of it.

But it was finally disposed of, and now came the hour that is apt to be a little difficult at picnics; the hour between the feast and the going home.

"I have a new game," said Mrs. Merryweather. "Perhaps you would like to try it presently; but first, Colonel Ferrers, while the boys are skylarking, or rather tree-larking, up there, I want to hear the story you were telling Miles on the drive over. I could not hear very well on the back seat, and besides, I was making up my game. It was some adventure of yours when you were a boy."

"Capital story!" said Mr. Merryweather. "Do tell it, Colonel; I want to hear it again."

The Colonel smiled, and puffed meditatively at his cigar.

"Story of the barrel, eh?" he said. "Upon

my word, now, I think it is pretty hard to make me tell that story before all these young people. What do you say, Gertrude? you don't want to hear about your old friend's being a young fool, do you?"

"Oh! Colonel Ferrers," said Gertrude; "a story that makes your eyes twinkle so must be one that we all want to hear. Do begin, please!"

And all the girls, who had been putting away the table-cloth and "tidying-up" generally, gathered about the Colonel in an eager group.

"Well! well!" he said, glancing from one bright face to another. "After all, what are we old fogies for, but to point a moral and adorn a tale? Listen, then. This happened when I was a young jackanapes of about my nephew's age; I knew everything in the world then, you understand, and nobody else knew much of anything. That was my belief, as it is the belief of most young men."

"Uncle," said a voice from above, "there are three young men up here who are prepared to drop things on your head if you slander their generation."

"Slander your generation, sir?" cried the Colonel, "by likening it to my own? Of all the monstrous insolence I ever heard — you may be thankful, sir, that I name yours in the same breath with it. Be good enough to hold your tongue, sir, and attend to your business, which is that of listening to me. Well, my dear madam, at the period of which I speak, I was in the office of my uncle, Marmaduke Ferrers, India merchant, importer of tea, silks, that sort of thing. Learning the trade, you understand; though, as I say, I was not aware that there was anything in particular to learn. This is one of the lessons I did learn. One day I was sent to the warehouse to count some barrels, and see them stowed away in the vault where they belonged. They were a special thing, barrels

of minerals for some collection museum, I forget what. Out of our own line, but we had undertaken to store and keep them for a time. The vault was directly under the warehouse, which was some way from the office. So! I went down and found no one there; The men were at their dinner, you understand. They may have been a little in a hurry, may have started a few minutes before the bell rang; I don't know how it was. At any rate, I was in a towering passion; thought the whole business was going to the dogs for want of discipline, wanted to dismiss every man in the warehouse. Men who had been there before I was born, and knew more about tea than I was likely to know in my lifetime. Well, sir, it came into my ass's head that I would give these men a lesson, show them that there was some one in the place that meant to have things done when he wanted them done. I would stow those barrels myself. I was strong as a bull, you remember — I beg ten

thousand pardons! you and your husband were infants when this happened; not out of long clothes, I am positive. But I was uncommonly strong, and thought Milo and Hercules would have found me a tough subject to tackle. Well — speaking of tackle — there was the rope and pulley, all ready for lowering; block up at the ceiling, rope dangling, — just over the trap that led into the vault. There were the barrels; nothing was easier, I thought. Child's play; I would have every one of the barrels lowered and stowed before those scoundrels came back from their dinner. I pushed the first barrel to the edge of the trap (lifted the trap-door first, you understand), hooked on the 'fall,' pleased as Punch with myself — the only man in the world, I give you my word; then I got a good hold on the rope, and — kicked the barrel over the edge."

"Oh! Colonel Ferrers!" cried the girls.

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared the boys in the tree.

"Loaded with minerals, you understand! stone, metal, I don't know what. The barrel went down, and I went up."

"*Oh!* Colonel Ferrers!"

"Up to the ceiling, I give you my word. High room, too, great warehouse, twenty feet if it was one. There I hung, and there I swung, a spectacle for gods and men."

"What *did* you do?" asked Mrs. Merryweather, as soon as she could control her laughter. "Dear friend, it is most heartless to laugh, but how can we help it? How did you ever get down? did you have to wait till the men came back?"

"No, madam. My pride would not allow that. I learned my lesson, or a part of it, while I hung there like Mahomet's coffin; I learned that Gravitation did not trouble itself about superior young men; but I did not learn all that there was to learn; that took the sequel. Well, I hung there, as I say, revolving slowly; centrifugal force, you understand; I

was really exemplifying the workings of natural forces; interesting demonstration, if there had been any one there to see. My crumb of comfort was that there was no one. I must get down before those men came back from dinner; that was the one thing necessary in the world at that moment. I measured the space of the trap as I swung; I prided myself on my correct eye; you see I was a most complete ass: I have seen only a few completer. I thought I could jump down astride of the trap, so to speak, and get no harm. I came down the rope, hand over fist, till I got to the end of it; only about six feet between me and safety: then I jumped."

"And did you —"

"No, my dear madam, I did not. I went down into the cellar, on top of the barrel, and I carry the mark of the edge of that barrel on my shoulders to this day, and shall to my latest day. And the moral of this story," the Colonel concluded, glancing up into the

depths of the great hemlock, "the moral, my young friends, is: wait till you know something before you decide that you know everything."

When the laughter had subsided, Mr. Merryweather said: "Your story, Colonel, reminds me of a scrape that Roger and I once got into, years ago. No, it wasn't Roger, it was my brother Will. My children all know it, but it may be new to you and our other guests. It happened when we were out sailing one day, on this very pond. The water was pretty low that year, and we got over into a cove on the north side, where we seldom went, and didn't know the ground thoroughly. Indeed, in very low water, one is apt to find that one doesn't know any ground thoroughly. New ledges and rocks are constantly cropping out — as you shall hear. Well, we were sailing along in fine style, before a fair wind, when suddenly — we ran aground."

"On the shore?" asked the Colonel.

"No; on a rock. It was getting dark, and we could not see very well, but I could see a nose of rock, and it looked like the end of a ledge. 'I'll get out and shove her off!' said I. I sounded with an oar, and found the water barely ankle-deep on the ledge. So I took off my shoes and stockings, rolled up my trousers a little, and stepped in — up to my neck!"

"Ha! ha!" roared the Colonel. "Ho! ho! that was sport. I wish I had seen you."

"Wait a moment!" said the Chief. "The picture is not ready for exhibition yet. When Will had got through laughing at me, he went to work — I found I could not stir the boat alone — he went to work and got ready. Stripped to the skin — he had on a new suit, and was something of a dandy in those days — stepped carefully overboard — and landed in water three inches deep."

"Merryweather, you are making this up!"

"Indeed I am not, my dear sir. There we

stood, I up to my chin, he with his toes under water, and laughed till we were so weak that we had to go ashore and sit down before we had strength to push that boat off. There is my Roland for your Oliver, Colonel. And now, Miranda, I think we are ready for your game. Come down, boys!"

The boys came scrambling down, still laughing over the stories, and soon all were seated on the carpet of dry, fragrant pine-needles. The girls had found some oak-leaves ("It is my belief," said Mr. Merryweather, "that if Bell went to a picnic in a coal-mine or on a sand-bank, she would still manage to find oak-leaves somewhere!"), and were busily twining garlands for the heads of the company.

"Are we all ready?" asked Mrs. Merryweather. "Well! my game — a very simple one — is called *Vocabulary*. It came from my reading the other day an admirable little book written by a wise professor, in which he

deplores the poverty of our vocabularies, and makes a suggestion for our enlarging them. He advises us to add two or three words to our list every week. The first time we use a new word, he says, it will be embarrassing to us and, it may be, amusing to our hearers; but if we have courage and patience, we shall be doing a good work not only for ourselves, but for all our generation and the generations that are to come. Well, this naturally appealed to me, and I was thinking of proposing it to you all this evening; and then, as we were driving over, it occurred to me that it might be made into a rather amusing game."

"Miranda," said her husband, "is there anything in life that you do *not* think can be made into a rather amusing game? But go on!"

"Dear Mammy!" said Phil. "Do you remember when you and I both had the toothache, and you thought it might be amusing

to count the jumps and see how many there were in a minute?"

"Well, so it would have been," said his mother, "if we had only had a little more fortitude. Now if you are all going to laugh at me, you shall not learn the game."

"Oh, we will be good!" exclaimed the Merryweathers. "We truly will."

"The game of *Vocabulary*," said Mrs. Merryweather, "is played thus. One — I, for example — begins to tell a story. I say, 'I went out to walk this morning, and I met —' there I stop short, and you, in turn, give a verb synonymous, more or less, with 'met.' This goes around the circle till some one cannot find a verb, and that some one must continue the story, stopping at any word he likes. I fear this is not very clear; perhaps we can illustrate it best playing it. I will begin as I suggested. I went out to walk this morning, and on my way I met —" she stopped.

"Encountered!" said Mr. Merryweather.

"Approached!" said the Colonel.

"Ran up against!" said Gerald.

"Fell afoul of!" said Phil.

"Fell in with!" said Bell.

"Peggy, you come next."

"Oh! I can't!" cried poor Peggy. "They have said everything; Mrs. Merryweather, I can't *ever* play anything of this kind, you know. I am too stupid."

"Nonsense, my child; you are not in the least stupid. If you cannot think of a word, go on with the story."

"But I don't know how!" cried Peggy, her eyes growing large and round, with a look that Gertrude and Margaret knew only too well. The tears were not far behind those round blue eyes; and Margaret hastened to the rescue. "You met a man, dear!" she whispered. "That is all you need say."

"Well — I met a man!" said Peggy, with a gasp.

"Person!"

"Individual!"

"Anthropoid ape!"

"Masculine mortal!"

"Chump!"

"I object to the definition!" said Mrs. Merryweather. "In case of a false definition, the falsifier takes up the thread. Go on, Jerry."

"This man (he *was* a chump, you'll see!) was so ugly that not a crow dared to stay in the same county with him, and so disagreeable that it gave one spasms to look at him; also, he had not the manners to take off his hat—" he stopped short.

"Cap!"

"Hood!"

"Helmet!"

"Bonnet!"

"Head-dress!"

"Tam-o'-shanter!"

"Mitre!"

"Tiara!"

"Fez!"

"Turban!"

"Beretta!"

"I give in!" cried the Colonel. "I cannot think of another thing, so I continue the tale.

"This odious person, after passing me in the unmannerly fashion described, was about to proceed further; but I, seizing him by the coat collar, lifted my stout stick, and gave him a good sound —"

"Thrashing!"

"Licking!"

"Beating!"

"Chastisement!"

"Hiding!"

"Walloping!"

"Whipping!"

"Scourging!"

"Drubbing!"

"Trouncing!"

"Thwacking!"

"Lashing!"

"Flogging!"

"Caning!"

"Larruping!"

"Fustigating!"

"Basting!"

"Leathering!"

"Thumping!"

"Whopping!"

"Rib-roasting!"

"Dear me!" cried Mrs. Merryweather. "This is rather terrible, I think. There seem to be more terms to express personal violence than anything else."

"We haven't begun to give them all, either!" said Phil. "If we are allowed to use modern slang — I know you prefer ancient, Mammy —"

"I know you are a saucy boy!" said his mother.

"My dear friends," said the Chief, rising. "This is all very fine: but the simple fact is,

it is beginning to rain, and I think it advisable for us to beat, fustigate, (where *did* you get that, Miranda?) or wallop, a retreat!"

Then there was scrambling up, and running to and fro, and gathering up of baskets and shawls. The good old horse, which had been grazing peacefully in a clearing hard by, was harnessed, and Mr. and Mrs. Merryweather, Colonel Ferrers, and the *impedimenta* bundled in and off as hastily as might be. Finally, as the rain began to pour down in good earnest, the younger campers gathered into a solid phalanx and walked home across the fields, singing in chorus, and informing all whom it might concern that they were

"Marching along,
Fifty score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!"

CHAPTER V.

KITTY AND WILLY

"MA!" said Willy Merryweather.

"Baa!" replied his mother, without looking up from her writing.

Willy fidgeted, and looked over his shoulder. "Mammy, I wish you would speak to Kitty."

"Speak to Kitty? certainly. How do you do, Kitty?"

Willy looked uncomfortable, but went on.

"I spoke for the Rangeley boat, and now she wants it. She always wants it, and it isn't fair."

"I don't always want it, Willy! I haven't been in it for two days. I think you are very unkind."

By this time Mrs. Merryweather had fin-

ished her sentence; she looked up, and surveyed the two children with a half-abstracted gaze.

"Who are you?" she asked, abruptly. "I thought Kitty and Willy were here."

Kitty took hold of the hem of her apron, and Willy felt of the knife in his pocket.

"Who are you?" repeated Mrs. Merryweather in a tone of wonder. "You should always answer a question, you know."

"We are Kitty and Willy ourselves!" murmured the children, the red beginning to creep around their ears.

"Oh, no!" said Mrs. Merryweather, reprovingly. "Don't say such things as that, my dears. I know Kitty and Willy perfectly well; they are brother and sister, two cheerful, affectionate children, who love each other. I don't know anything about you two; run away, please, for I am busy."

As the children moved slowly away, she called after them: "If you should see Kitty

and Willy, you might send them to me, if you please!"

Round on the other side of the big oak-tree, sheltered from the eyes that looked so abstractedly over their glasses, Willy rubbed his shoulders uncomfortably against the bark, while Kitty kicked a bit of stick to and fro.

"There isn't any use in talking to Mammy when she does that way!" said Willy, half to himself, but with a side glance at Kitty. "If she would have only listened to me — "

"She never will!" said Kitty, responding to the half glance. "She always says there is no need of quarrelling, and she doesn't see why she should have to hear disagreeable remarks."

"Other children scrap," said Willy. "I don't see why we can't now and then."

"Well, she just won't have it, Will, so where's the use? Never mind about the Rangeley; you may have it, and I'll take the *Wobbler*."

"I don't care!" said Willy. "You may have her."

"So may you!"

Silence. Willy rubbing his shoulders, Kitty kicking her bit of stick.

Presently Kitty looked up brightly, and shook her curls back. "I've got over mine, Willy!" she announced. "Are you getting over yours?"

"Ye-es!" said Willy, slowly. "I — s'pose I am."

"Why don't we go together?" asked Kitty. "Then we can both have the Rangeley."

"All right!" said Willy, brightening at once. "Where shall we go? We might play Pirate a bit —"

"And then go for the milk! That would be great!"

"All right, come on, Kit."

"Oh! but, Willy —"

"Well?"

"We must go and and tell Mammy first."

Once more the two children presented themselves before their mother, who was still writing busily. At the first "Mammy!" she looked up quickly.

"Well, dears!" she said, "I was wondering where you were. What are you going to play this afternoon?"

"We thought perhaps we might have the Rangeley together, and play Pirate!" said Willy.

"And then go for the milk!" said Kitty.

"To be sure!" said Mrs. Merryweather. "Yes, Papa said you might have the boat if you wanted it. That will be very nice, only be careful, dears. Give Mammy a kiss, and have a great good time."

"Run her up!" said the Pirate Captain.

"Ay, ay, sir!" replied the mate.

The Jolly Roger fluttered up to the masthead: skull and crossbones black as ink could make them, ground very nearly white; it was

a splendid flag. The Captain was a terrible figure, clad in yellow oilskins many sizes too big for him, with ferocious mustaches curling up to his eyes. His belt contained a perfect armory of weapons; item, a pistol that had lost its barrel; item, three wooden daggers, assorted sizes; item, one tomahawk, home-made. The mate was scarcely less terrifying, for though a blue petticoat showed beneath his oilskin jacket, and curls flowed from under his sou'wester, he made up for it by a mass of oakum beard and whisker that was truly awe-inspiring. Also, he had the truncheon which used to be a curling stick, and a deadly weapon of singular appearance which was understood to be a boomerang.

"Look out, Bill! avast there! dost see any foes about?"

"Ay, ay, sir! I see a craft on the jib boom —"

"*Lee bow*, Kitty! — I mean Bill; not jib boom! You are always saying that."

"'TIS NOT A PLATE SHIP!'"

"I meant lee bow!" said Bill, anxious to please. "Anyhow, I see a craft, your Honor. I think she is a plate ship from the Spanish Main. Shall we run her down?"

"Give me the glass!" exclaimed the Pirate Captain: and through that instrument, which the ignorant might have mistaken for a battered tin horn, he scrutinized the "craft," which lay on the water at some distance.

"'Tis not a plate ship!" he announced at length. "I think we have had enough plate ships lately. This is a Dutch lugger from Samarcand, laden with raisins and fig-paste and lichi nuts and cream dates. I shouldn't wonder if she had narghiles too, and scimitars, — I need a new scimitar, — and all sorts of things. Up helm, and crowd on all sail in pursuit!"

"Ay, ay, sir! stunsels?"

"Stunsels, balloon-jibs, topgallant spinnakers, royal skyscrapers, everything you can think of. Ha! we are off! Row hard now,

Bill! The lubbers are asleep, and we shall run them down easily. Are the cutlasses ready?"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Ho! we are gaining on them. Ho, ho! bend to your oars, my hearties! grappling-chains ready there! ho! on to the chase!"

Now Phil was very busy making a fly for lake trout, and explaining the manufacture of it to Peggy; and Peggy was absorbed in watching him, and in counting the number of separate aches she felt after her first lesson in rowing. Moreover, the bloody pirates had conducted their conversation in a half-whisper, and the wind was the other way. But suddenly, Peggy looked up and saw them, now at only a few yards distance.

"Good gracious!" she cried. "What is it? Do look, Phil!"

Phil looked hastily around; chuckled, and fell into an attitude of abject terror. "Mercy! mercy!" he cried; cowering down

in his seat. ("It's the kids; please be frightened!) Oh! what will become of us? We are lost!"

"Oh! save me, spare me!" cried Peggy, following suit, and clasping her hands in supplication.

The pirate bark ran alongside, and grappling-irons were tossed aboard the ill-fated merchantman. The Pirate Captain, standing in the stern of his vessel, surveyed them with baleful looks.

"What ship is this?"

"The *Weeping Woodchuck*, Captain Zebedee Moses of Squedunk, please your Honor's Worship!"

"Well I am Captain England, and this is the *Gory Griffin*. If you have a cargo of raisins and fig-paste and cream dates, hand them over; otherwise, prepare to walk the plank this instant!"

"Oh, spare us! spare this tender maiden!" cried Phil. "I have no fig-paste, but wouldn't

fresh doughnuts do as well, O man of blood? Life is sweet — and fish is needed for supper!"

At these remarks the pirate's ferocious scowl relaxed somewhat. "Hand over your doughnuts!" he said, briefly. "This once I spare ye, but cross not my path again! I jolly well forgot about tea," he added, as Phil tossed him some doughnuts; "I suppose it must be about time to go for the milk, perhaps, is it?"

Phil looked at his watch. "Well, I should say it jolly well was!" he replied. "You'd better be off, young ones — I mean Scourges of the Deep!"

It was quite a pull over to the point where the milk-cans were waiting, but Kitty and Willy were both good oars, and the doughnuts were crisp and fortifying.

"Let's take the point by storm!" suggested the gallant England, who had not had his fill of glory. "The cans might be

treasure, you know, and we can creep up silently."

"But there's no one to hear us be silent!" said Kitty.

"Oh, that's nothing! We can hear ourselves, and, anyhow, it is good practice. Come on, now! Be silent as the grave!" Leaving the boat on the shore, they crept up the beach, pounced on the milk-can, — a tall "separator" which held the whole provision for the family supper and breakfast, — and bore it in triumph to the boat. But, alas! for the gallant pirates! In getting aboard, one of them slipped; the other stumbled; between the two, neither could tell just how, the tall can toppled, and fell into the boat; the stopper flew out — "Then all the mighty floods were out!"

"But where *can* the children be?" asked Mrs. Merryweather, for the tenth time.

The horn had blown for supper, the fish

were fried, the campers were hungry and thirsty; and the milk had not come.

"Where *can* they be?" said every one.

Mr. Merryweather put down the glass with which he had been sweeping the lake. "They are out there!" he said. "I see them, but they don't seem to be rowing. Give me the megaphone, will you, Jerry? Thanks!"

A calm roar went out across the lake. "Come — in — to — tea!"

A faint pipe was heard in reply. "Don't — want — any — tea!"

The second roar was still calm, but peremptory. "*Come — in!*"

Slowly, very slowly, the oars rose and fell, and the boat crept over the water. What could be the matter with the children?

"Too much bloodshed has upset the gallant England!" said Phil. "When it comes to Willy's not wanting his tea!"

"They have had some accident!" said Mr.

Merryweather. "Broken an oar, probably, or lost a rowlock. No. They are both rowing. Well, here they come."

The whole family started for the wharf, but a piteous wail arose from the now approaching boat.

"Please don't everybody come down! we want just Papa and Mamma."

"Stay here, dear people, please!" said Mrs. Merryweather; and both parents hurried down to the wharf, toward which two dejected little figures were now tugging a very heavy boat.

"What's the matter, Will?" said Mr. Merryweather. "Speak up, son."

"We — spilt the milk!" said Willy, in a carefully measured tone.

"Oh, my dears! all of it?" inquired their mother.

"Every drop!" said Willy, grimly.

"Oh, Mammy, we are so sorry!" cried Kitty. "The old can — just — upset! and

we are so wet, and it keeps splashing all over my legs!"

"There! there! come ashore; never mind about the milk!" said Mr. Merryweather.

"Never mind!" echoed Mrs. Merryweather, heartily. "My poor chicks, where have you been all this time? Why didn't you come straight home?"

"We were — afraid!" sobbed Kitty. "We have been rowing around for ever and ever so long, and we are so tired, and hungry, and — wet —"

But by this time Kitty was near enough for her father to bend down and lift her bodily out of the boat, and put her, all dripping milk as she was, into her mother's arms. On her mother's shoulder she sobbed out the rest of the pitiful little story. Kitty was twelve, and not specially small of her age; but she was the baby, and Mrs. Merryweather sat down on the wharf and rocked to and fro, hushing her.

"There! there!" she said, soothingly. "My lamb! as if all the milk in the world were worth your crying about! and crying into the spilt milk, too, and making the boat all the wetter! Hush! hush! Run along, Papa and Willy — dear little boy, it really is only funny, so don't fret, not one little scrap. Kitty and I will come in about two minutes."

CHAPTER VI.

A DISCUSSION

THE morning reading was over, but the girls lingered in the pine parlor, where the whole family had been gathered to hear some thrilling chapters of Parkman. Margaret and Bell had their sewing, Gertrude her drawing-board; Peggy was carving the handle of a walking-stick, while Kitty struggled with some refractory knitting-needles.

It was a pleasant place in which they were sitting: a little clear space of pine-needles, embroidered here and there with tiny ferns, and shut in by walls of dusky pine, soft and fragrant. The tree-trunks made excellent (though sometimes rather sticky) chair-backs; the sunshine filtered in through the

branches overhead, making a golden half-light which was the very essence of restfulness.

"Oh, pleasant place!" said Margaret, breaking the silence that had followed the departure of the rest of the family. "How strange it seems, sitting here in this green peace and quiet, to read of all those terrible happenings. How can it be the same world?"

"He was a man, that La Salle!" exclaimed Peggy. "I never heard of such a man. Think of that winter voyage! Think of that man, brought up in luxury, with every kind of accomplishment, and that kind of thing, wading in snow-water up to his knees, and sleeping on the frozen ground, rolled in his blanket, while his clothes dried and froze stiff on the trees! think of him standing alone against courts and savages, and winning every time — till he was killed by those wretches. It is the greatest story I ever read. Now, if all history were like this, Margaret, I never should complain."

"Don't you like history, Peggy?" asked Bell, looking up in wonder.

"I used to detest it," said Peggy, laughing. "Julius Cæsar, and William the Conqueror, and all those people used to bore me dreadfully, though Margaret did her very best to make them interesting; didn't you, you dear?"

"I tried, Peggy," said Margaret, with a smile; "but you never would admit that they were real people, just as real as if they were alive to-day."

"Oh, well, of course I know they were alive once, but so were mummies, and you can't expect me to be interested in *them*. However, I think I really am improving. 'Hereward' brought William alive for me, it truly did; and this Parkman book delights me. Oh! I should like to have made that voyage down the Mississippi, girls! I think, on the whole, I would rather be Cavalier de La Salle than any one I ever heard of."

"In spite of all the suffering and tragedy?" said Gertrude. "I could not say that, much as I admire him."

"Who would you be, if you could choose? Let us all say!" cried Bell. "A new game! two minutes for reflection!" and she took out her watch with a business-like air.

"Oh!" cried Gertrude. "But there are so many!"

"Silence!" said Bell; and there was an instant of absolute stillness. Taking advantage of it, a chipmunk ran across the brown carpet, and pausing midway, sat up on his haunches and surveyed the new and singular mountain ranges that had risen on his horizon. One of the mountains stirred — whisk! he was gone.

"Time's up!" said Bell. "Margaret, I will begin with you. With all history to choose from, who will you be?"

"Oh! must I be first?" cried Margaret. "As Gertrude says, there are so many; and

yet when you come to think them over, there is something against every one; I mean something one would not like to do or to suffer. But, — on the whole, — I *think* I would be Elizabeth of Hungary."

"Our Lady of the Roses? Well, she was lovely, though I should be sorry to marry her husband. The story would have been somewhat different if I had; but I am not a saint. Peggy, your turn!"

"This man we are reading about!" said Peggy, decidedly. "La Salle!"

"Toots!"

"Bell, you know I never *can* decide between Shakespeare and Raphael. I have to be both; they lived quite far enough apart for separate incarnations."

"Greedy, grasping girl!" said Bell. "Kitty, who are you?"

"Jim Hawkins!" said Kitty, promptly.

"No fiction allowed this time, Missy, only history!"

"Oh, dear! well, then — Francis Drake!"

"Bound to have a pirate, aren't you, Kitty?" said Gertrude, mischievously.

"He wasn't a pirate!" cried Kitty, indignantly. "He was a great hero."

"*L'un n'empêchait pas l'autre*, in those days!" said Bell.

"Well, now for yourself, Bell!" said Margaret. "It is your turn."

"Oh, I didn't need any two minutes," said Bell. "I am always William the Silent. I should be Beethoven if it were not for the deafness, but that I could not have borne."

"You all want to be men, don't you?" observed Margaret, thoughtfully.

"Why — yes, so we do! you are the only one who chose a woman."

"Everybody would be a man if they could!" cried Peggy, throwing grammar to the winds, as she was apt to do when excited.

"No, indeed, everybody would not!" cried

Margaret, her soft eyes lighting up. "Nothing would induce me to be a man."

"I don't think you would make a very good one, to be sure!" said Peggy, looking affectionately at her cousin. "But I bet — I mean wager — you told me I might say 'wager,' Margaret! — that none of the other girls would hesitate a minute if they had the chance. I wouldn't! Think of it! No petticoats, no fuss, no having to remember to do this, and not to do that; and no hairpins, or gloves, or best hats —"

"Ah!" said Bell; "that is only the smallest part, Peggy. I don't mind the hairpin part — though of course it is a joy to get out here and dispense with them — but still, that is only a trifle. The thing I think about is the freedom, the strength, the power to go right ahead and *do* things!" and, as she spoke, Bell threw her head back and stretched her arms abroad with a vigorous gesture. "Of course we girls are all well and strong,

but it isn't the same strength as a man's We are constantly running up against things we cannot, ought not to do. I *do* envy the boys, I cannot help it."

"Yes!" cried Margaret, leaning forward, a soft flush rising to her cheeks. "I know — it is glorious to see them; but, Bell, isn't the very weakness part of our strength? Isn't it just because women *know* the — the things they cannot do, that they are able to understand and sympathize, and — and help, in ways that men cannot, because they do not know?"

"I think Margaret is right!" said Gertrude, slowly. "And besides, there is strength and strength, Bell. For long endurance of pain or hardship, the woman will outlast the man nine times out of ten, I believe; and I heard Doctor Strong say once that women would often bear pain quietly that would set a man raving. Yes, I come over to your side, May Margaret. I would take Joan of Arc, if

it were not for the stake. Let me see — oh, I know! I will be Grace Darling."

"Who was she?" asked Kitty.

"The lighthouse-keeper's daughter, at Longstone, off the Yorkshire coast. A ship, the *Forfarshire*, was wrecked on the rocks near by, and there seemed no chance of saving any of the crew; but Grace persuaded her father to try, and just those two rowed out, in a most terrible storm, to the reef on which the vessel had been wrecked, and saved the nine men, all that were left out of sixty-three, who were clinging to the rocks, waiting for death. Why wasn't that just as fine as commanding an army, or even leading a forlorn hope in battle? Then there was dear Margaret Roper — I think she is the one for you, May Margaret! — and Cochrane's Bonny Grizzy, and — oh, ever and ever so many of them. Yes, I take up my stand once and for all on my own side."

"Well!" said Bell, shaking her head. "I

hear what you say, Betsy, but it makes no difference, — does it, Peggy? — though I admit the force of your remarks."

"Not a bit!" said Peggy. "I wouldn't have been Mrs. La Salle for a farm."

"There wasn't any!" said Margaret.

"The principle remains the same," said Peggy, "as Miss Russell used to say."

"There is another thing!" said Margaret. "Your life out here, Bell, shows me how much girls *can* do; I mean in the active, outdoor, athletic way. More than I ever dreamed they could do. It really seems to me that, except just for the petticoats, you have very few drawbacks. I suppose it is having all the brothers. Why, you know as much as they do about the woods and all."

"Yes, it's partly the boys," said Bell; "but it is much more Papa. You see, from the time we could walk, he has always taken us out into the woods and fields, and made us

use our eyes and ears, and talked to us about things. We should not know anything, if it were not for Papa."

"He does seem to know almost everything!" said Margaret. "I never saw any one like him."

"There *isn't* any one like him," said Gertrude, decidedly. "What have you got there, Margaret?"

Margaret had drawn a letter from her pocket, and was looking it over.

"An argument on my side," she said, smiling. "May I read it aloud?"

"Do! do!" cried all the girls.

Margaret smoothed out the crumpled pages affectionately. "He carried it in his pocket two days before he remembered to post it!" she said. "I judge from the date, and the appearance of the envelope. There was candy in his pocket, and" — she sniffed at the letter — "yes! tar, without doubt. Now listen!

"'DEAR COUSIN MARGARET: — We miss you awfully, and Uncle John says it is no kind of a house without you, and it isn't. We went a walk yesterday, Susan D. and me and the dogs, because you know it was Sunday; Uncle John was coming too, but he had roomatizm and coud not. Well Cousin Margaret, we walked over the big hill and just then the dogs began howling and yelling in the most awful manner, and running round and round like they were crazy; and we ran to see what was up, and we found out, I tell you! It was white hornets, about ten thousand of them, and the dogs had rolled in a nest of them, and they were stinging their noses, and they flew at us with perfeck fewry, I mean the hornets did. I hollered and ran, but Susan D. said wait she knew what to do, so she said "Come on," and we ran down to the brook and she took mud and put it on my stings before she touched her own, and it took a good deal of the pane out though

not all. And then she put it on the dogs' noses, and they understood like persons, and poked them into the mud themselves and soon forgot their pane. But I thought I would tell you this Cousin Margaret, because Susan D. did really behave like a perfeck brick, and you always said girls were as brave as boys but I never thought so before but now I do; because I hollered right out when they stung me which I am ashamed of. You said confession was good for the sole, and so I think: so now I will say good-by from

"'BASIL.'"

"What a dear boy!" cried Gertrude.

"Oh, he is!" said Margaret, the happy tears springing to her eyes. "He is one of the very dearest boys that ever lived, Gertrude; so manly and honest, and so funny, too. Gerald knows him!" she added, shyly. "I wish he had been at home when you were there, Peggy."

"Yes; he must be a brick!" said Peggy. "Now, Margaret, you know he is, and you know that nothing but 'brick' expresses what I mean. Girls, I appeal to you. Margaret wants me to talk like a professor all the time, and I am not a professor, and am never likely to be one. Bell, isn't 'brick' all right?"

Bell looked conscious. "I confess I say it, Peggy; I confess it seems much heartier than the same thing in what my mother calls good English. Still — I believe it would sound very queer to me if she used it; the mother, I mean."

"Grace used to say 'a quadrangular piece of baked clay!'" said Gertrude. "Don't you remember, Peggy?"

"So she did — dear thing! Well, but, Bell, would you have girls talk just the way grown-up people do? It would sound awfully stiff and poky. I don't mean that it sounds so when your mother talks!" she cried; "of

course you know I don't mean that. But girls *aren't* grown-up, you know."

"But they are going to be!" said Margaret. "If they don't learn good English now, how are they going to do it later? It does seem to me a terrible pity, with all our great, glorious language, to use so little of it, and to use it so often wrong. You may think me priggish and professorial, and anything else you like, Peggy dear, but that is what I think."

"I love you to distraction," said Peggy; "you are an angel, but I think you carry it too far. What would you say instead of 'brick?' how would you describe this boy — who simply *is* a brick?"

Margaret reflected. "I should say he was a nice, manly boy!" she said, presently.

"Nice! now, Margaret! 'nice' is niminy, you know it is, and piminy too."

"The great advantage of 'brick,'" said Bell, "is that it is one word, and 'nice manly boy'

is three, and doesn't mean the same thing then."

"There!" cried Peggy, in triumph. "What do you say to that, Margaret? Find one word in your old 'good English' that does express 'brick?'"

"Well—it isn't easy!" Margaret admitted. "'Trump' is the only one I can think of, and I suppose that was slang fifty years ago."

"The mother says that when a word has held its own for twenty years, it isn't slang any more," said Gertrude. "The question is—"

At this moment the sound of a horn was heard; a long, ringing blast, followed by a second and a third.

The girls sprang to their feet. "Hurrah for a swim!" cried Bell. "Come, bricks and trumps—I'll race you all to the tents!" And off they went with a flash of petticoats, leaving the chipmunk to speculate on the sudden upheavals of nature.

CHAPTER VII.

WATER PLAY

The floating wharf, as has been said, lay at the end of a long, narrow slip that ran out on piers over the water. Down the slip, one by one, now came the Merryweathers and their guests, in bathing array, the boys shouting and skylarking, — the girls singing and tossing their long hair about. Jack and Phil brought out a long spring-board, and set it up at the end of the wharf ; and then the fun began. Mr. Merryweather was the first to run along the board, and take a sober and dignified dive. He was followed by Gerald, turning handsprings, and carolling to the effect that he was a pirate king, he was ; hurrah for the pirate king ! Next came

"'COME ON! COME IN!'"

Jack, who turned a back somersault, ending with a noble splash; and so, one by one, like so many ducks, they dove and leaped and tumbled in, and splashed and swam about in the clear water. Peggy was with the rest, splashing as merrily as any of them; but Margaret sat on the wharf, in her pretty blue bathing-dress, her feet tucked under her, looking on.

"Come on, Margaret!" cried Peggy. "Come on! come in! It's perfectly great!"

"In a minute," said Margaret. "I like to watch you a bit first; it takes me a little while to get my courage up."

"Come, oh, come with me!" sang Gerald, emerging from the water, at her feet, and clinging to the wharf, while he shook the drops from his hair and eyes. "Come swim with me and be my swan! Come where the duckweed twineth! Come!"

"Oh, Gerald, yes; in just a minute. Is it very cold?"

"Cold? No; just right. Liquid crystal, sparkling sapphire, perfection! Come, you must have your swimming lesson. Forget the cheerful swain, — behold the stern instructor!"

He held out his hand with an imperative gesture. Margaret laid hers in it timidly.

"Let me get near the rope!" she said, rather nervously.

"Here is the rope, close by your hand. Now, then, hold fast! There we go!"

With one hand on the rope, and the other in Gerald's, Margaret slid into the water, giving a little cry as it bubbled up about her. "Gerald!"

"Right here, my lady. There; both hands on the rope now. Take it easy! Now you are all right."

"Ye' — yes, Gerald. Oh, isn't it glorious?"

"Rather! It's really the element to live

in, you see. A mistake was made somewhere. If I had but gills, I should ask no more of fate. As it is — "

He dove, and came up on the other side of the rope. "Don't you think I would be charming with gills, — pretty little quivering, rosy gills, — instead of side whiskers?"

"I never saw you in side whiskers," said Margaret, demurely, "so I cannot tell. You certainly don't seem to need the gills, though. How *do* you manage to keep under so long? Yesterday, when you stayed down picking up these pebbles, I was sure something had happened. Really, Gerald, I was very much frightened."

"I ought to have been switched," said Gerald. "I never thought of your noticing. I say, come down with me, and I'll show you the trick of it. It's just as easy!"

"Not for worlds!" cried Margaret, clutching the rope, as if she expected to be dragged from it by force. "I never should come up

alive. Oh, look, Gerald! what are they going to do now?"

"Going to dive over the elephants. Do you mind — oh, here is the child, Toots. Toots, will you stay here by Margaret, while I take my place in the ring? You are sure you are all right, Margaret?"

"Oh, yes; do go. I want to see it. Gertrude, what *are* they doing?"

"Look and see," said Gertrude. "Put your arms on the rope, and lift yourself higher. That's right."

Phil and Jack and Willy had placed themselves side by side, on their hands and knees, at the edge of the wharf, and were calling loudly for Gerald. He stepped back to the farther end of the float, then, running forward, soared into the air, over the backs of the "elephants," and came down straight as an arrow into the water; then, scrambling out, took his place in the row, while Phil performed the same manœuvre. Over and

over and over they went, running, rising, plunging, rising again. Margaret grew dizzy watching them. Now Mr. Merryweather advanced, holding a rubber hoop, which was neither more nor less than the discarded tire of a bicycle. This he and Gerald held out at arm's length, and the other boys dove through it, amid the applause of the girls.

"Oh, pretty!" cried Peggy. "Do you do that, girls?"

"Gertrude does; I haven't tried it yet," said Bell, who was floating placidly, her arms under her head, her face turned to the sky.

"I am going to try," said Peggy. "May I, Mr. Merryweather?"

"By all means!" said the Chief, heartily. "Take a good run — steady, Jerry. Hold it out well — there! hurrah!"

For Peggy had gone through the hoop like a bird, and after a clean dive, was coming up again, radiant and panting.

"Oh, Peggy, how splendid!" cried Mar-

garet, her eyes shining with pleasure and pride in her Peggy's prowess. "Gertrude, didn't she do it well? Such a pretty, graceful thing to do."

"*C'était une corquerre!*" said Gerald, heartily. "*Elle est aussi une corquerre, la Peggy.* You will be doing it soon yourself."

"Oh, never, never! You cannot seem to understand, Gerald, that I am not *made* for these things. I love to see them; I admire them intensely, but I cannot so much as think of trying."

"*Point de stonte pour Marguerite?*" said Gerald. "Alas the day! Because you really would do them so corkingly, you know, if only you should do them. Well, see here, I am going to give you a troll. You will like that, I am sure."

"A troll? I thought they were mountain goblins. I don't want one, thank you, sir! water nixies and pixies are as much as I can bear in the goblin line."

"Verb, not substantive!" replied Gerald. "I troll, thou lettest thyself be trolled, he, she, or it sees you being trolled and wishes that he, she, or it had such luck. Observe!"

He climbed into one of the Rangeley boats that lay near the float, loosed her moorings, and, taking up the oars, brought her close to the rope. "Now, Margaret, catch hold; here, at the stern!"

"What are you going to do with me, Gerald? I fear thee, ancient mariner, I fear thy skinny hand!"

"I hold you with my glittering eye, you cannot choose but come. I am going to take you off a-trolling. Hold on tight with your hands, and let all the rest of you go, as if you had nothing to do with it."

He took a few strokes, slowly and easily. Margaret, clinging to the stern, was drawn along without effort or motion of her own. Her long hair floated behind her; her white

arms gleamed like ivory through the clear water; her face was alight with pleasure.

"'Not wholly bad, Lysander Pratt?'" quoted Gerald, interrogatively.

"Oh, Gerald! it is almost too perfect! no, you needn't stop, I only said *almost*. The water feels like silk flowing by me: no, silk is rough beside it; it feels like — like —"

"Like water, possibly?" said Gerald; "stranger things have been."

"Well, there isn't anything else like it, is there? Oh! are you sure you will not take cold or anything, Gerald? I could go on forever, floating here — trolling, I mean."

"Nothing easier," said Gerald, pulling on with long, steady strokes. "We will just keep on; I ask nothing better. Years passed. A form was seen, gray and bent with age, feebly tugging at a pair of oars. Trailing behind the crazy boat, another figure might be distinguished — I forbear further description, Margaret: I may grow old, but not you;

please stay as you are always. Anyhow, the people will flock to the shore. Ha! the Muse! the afflatus descends.

"The people thronged the rocky shore,
And viewed that graybeard old and hoar;
'Oh! why thus dodderest at the oar,
Unhappy soul?'
The answer came: 'Forever more
She wished to troll!'"

"Gerald, I think we'd better go back now."

"Wait! she hasn't finished. Never interrupt a Muse! it isn't the thing to do.

"And still along that rocky coast,
A gibbering yet a gallant ghost,
He dodders, dodders at his post,
Nor nears the goal;
For she, the spook he cares for most,
Still loves to troll."

"Gerald, take me back, please! see, we are ever so far from shore, and it is time for me to go in, I am sure."

"Just look down, Margaret! see the bottom, all white sand; isn't that pleasant? Hi! there's a bream watching his nest. See him fanning about over it, never leaving the place. He'll keep that up for hours at a time. Domestic party, the bream! this is an excellent opportunity to study the habits of —"

"Gerald, I am cold!"

"We'll be there in two minutes!" said Gerald, settling to his oars. "Hold tight, now, Margaret! troll as the wolves of Apennine were all upon your track!" and with long, powerful strokes he sent the boat flying through the water, while Margaret fairly shrieked with delight and excitement.

Her face had been turned away from the float; but now she was speeding toward it, and looked eagerly to see what the others of the party were doing. To her great amazement, no one was in sight. The wharf lay wet and glistening in the sunshine, but no blue-clad figures leaped and pranced across it,

no merry faces emerged from the blue, sparkling water. All was silent and solitary.

"Why, Gerald," cried Margaret, "where are they all? have they gone in? Surely I heard their voices just a moment ago, and a great splash: where can they be?"

"A stunt!" replied Gerald. "For our benefit, I presume, but I scorn their levity. I advise you to take no notice of their childish pranks. I myself was young, once upon a time, but what then?"

They were now at the float, and Margaret looked about her, in utter amazement. All was silent; not a voice, not a whisper; no soul was in sight. It was as if she and Gerald were alone in the world. She stepped out on the float: at the instant, up from under her feet rose a sound as if the biggest giant that ever swung a club were sneezing. "A—*tchoo!*"

Margaret screamed outright. "Gerald! what is it?"

"Come out from there!" cried Gerald. "They are under the float, imbeciles that they are. The Pater has gone ashore, and the others manifest their nature, that is all. Come out, Apes of the Apennines! or I'll —"

The threat remained unfinished, for the Merryweathers came out. Swarming up from under the float, where they had been treading water at their ease, with plenty of breathing-space, they flung themselves with one accord upon Gerald's boat, capsized it, and dragged him into the water. A great splashing contest ensued, with much shouting and merriment, and they were still hard at it when "All in!" sounded from the boat-house.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MAIL

"STILL raining, Phil?" asked Mrs. Merryweather, looking up from her writing.

"Still, honored parent! or rather, to be exact, anything but still. Up on the hill, the wind is fierce. I had to ride round the blast once or twice, instead of going through it. Solid old wind, that!"

He threw off his dripping oilskin jacket, and came in, unslinging the letter-bag from his shoulder as he came.

"Letters! letters!" he cried. "Who wants letters?"

Every one gathered around him, holding out eager hands.

"One for me, Phil!"

"For me, Protector of the Poor!"

"Oh! please, Phil! I want three at least."

"If there is none for me, Fergy my boy, I shudder at the consequences for you!"

Phil distributed letters and papers; the family subsided on chairs and benches with their treasures, and for some minutes nothing was heard but the rustle of paper and the steady downpour of the rain.

"Oh!" cried Peggy, presently. "Oh—eee! splendid!"

"Sapolio!" exclaimed Gerald; and "Well! well!" said Mrs. Merryweather.

The three exclamations were simultaneous, and Bell, who had no letters, raised her hand with an imperative gesture. "Exclamation must be followed by explanation!" she said. "Law of the Medes and Persians. We shall be glad to hear from the exclaimers."

"Who? me? did I?" asked Peggy, looking up with sparkling eyes. "Semiramis has eight puppies. Think of it! eight whole puppies!"

"I never buy more than half a puppy at a time," said Gerald, "unless it is for a veal and ham pie."

"Gerald!"

"Well, it's a fact, Mater; I never do. What kind of puppies, thou of Limavaddy?"

"Gordon setters, black and tan: oh, she says they are perfect beauties. She says — this is Jean, you know, my sister — 'they are all like Semmy except one, and he is *blue*.' Who ever heard of a blue puppy? You shall have one, Snowy: I promised you one, don't you remember?-oh—eee! and the new colt is a perfect beauty too, and they have named her Peggy. Oh!"

Peggy looked down at her letter, then looked up again shyly. "I — don't suppose you would care to hear any of it?" she said, interrogatively.

"Indeed we should!" said Mrs. Merryweather, heartily. "We should like it extremely, Peggy. A letter from the Far

West ; why, it will be a journey for all of us."

"Great!" said Phil.

"Corking!" said Gerald. And one and all, in their several ways, expressed their desire to hear the letter.

Dimpling with pleasure, her rosy face beaming, Peggy began to read.

"'Dear old' — oh, well, I won't read just the beginning, because it is just the way we talk to each other, you know. I wish you knew Jean, Snowy. Let me see! oh, yes, here it is.

"'This is eight birthdays all at once, for what do you think, Peggy ? this morning we missed Semmy at breakfast, and could not find her anywhere. There were kidneys, and you know she always finishes the dish off, because she is so fond of them. Well, and so I went to look for her, and she wasn't in her box, or in the shed, or behind the kitchen stove, or anywhere where she usually is. So

I went out to the stable, and there I heard little squeaks and squeals, the funniest you ever heard, and then a growl in Semmy's voice as I opened the door. Then the dear thing heard my step, and was ashamed of growling, and began thumping her tail on the floor till I should have thought she would break it. And there she was, all cuddled down in a pile of hay, and the dear little darling things all cuddled round her. I never saw anything so perfectly dear! they were all blind, and bald all over, and pink, and squealing like anything; you never *did* see anything so lovely in all your life, at least I never did. Well, she let me take them up, one by one, old darling, though I could see that it made her nervous. Most of them are like her, beautifully marked, with pink noses, and black ears, and just the right blackness and tanness on them; but one is very queer, great splotches of black on his nose and his hind quarters, and all the rest of him white.

So they named him "Magpie," right off; but I haven't come to the names yet. He is not very pretty, but he looks *very* bright, and I shouldn't wonder if he was terribly clever, to make up for not being so handsome as the others. And the other different one is a perfect beauty, though you may not think so when I tell you that he is *blue*. Yes, truly blue; of course I don't mean sky blue, nor navy, but the black is all mixed in through the white, — I can't explain to you just how it is — but anyhow, at a little distance, he does truly and honestly look blue. Well, so — I was the first to find them, so Father said I might name them, but of course I wanted us all to do it together; so we all thought, and each made a list. Oh, Peggy, we did want you; and I wanted to wait till you could send your list too, but the others thought you would not mind, and it is nicer to have them named quickly, because then their names seem to belong to them more,

and they look like them. Perhaps, I mean, if you had been called something else till you were two or three years old, you might not have been so just exactly Peggy as you are, you dear old thing.'

"Perhaps I ought not to have read that," said Peggy, looking up with a blush; "but it is as like Jean as I am like Peggy, if I am like it, whatever it is."

"You certainly are like 'it,'" said Gertrude, laughing, "and 'it' certainly is a dear old thing. Go on, please. We are all longing to hear the list."

Peggy threw her a kiss, and went on.

"'I will not give you all the lists, for that would take up all the rest of my letter; but here is the one we finally made out. There are three females, and five males, you know: *Cleopatra*, *Meg* (Merrilies; that was Flora's, because she is just reading "Guy Mannering"), *Diana*, *Guy* (for the same reason), *Shot*, *Hector*, *Ajax*, and *Magpie*.'

"Well, I do think that is a queer list," Peggy concluded, folding up the letter. "I wish they had called one 'Gray Brother,' or 'Bagheera.'"

"But they are not wolves or panthers," objected Mr. Merryweather. "I should say that was a very fair list of names, Peggy, as names go. It is always hard to find a good name for a dog. 'Shot' is an excellent name. We had a good old dog named Shot, and I have always liked the name."

"Mammy," said Bell, "are we not to hear something from you?"

"From me, my dear?" repeated Mrs. Merryweather. "What would you like to hear?"

"I should think you were an amiable gramophone," replied her daughter, with affectionate disrespect. "And I *think* you really know what I mean, madam, in spite of that innocent look. On reading your letters, you and Jerry exclaimed: 'Well,

well!' and 'Sapolio!' at the same instant, and your letters are on the same kind of paper, I cannot help seeing that. Have you something to break to us? 'Sapolio' is a baleful utterance, delivered as Jerry delivered it just now."

"Gee! I should think it was!" muttered Gerald, gloomily. He had brightened up while Peggy was reading her letter, but now his usually bright face was clouded with unmistakable vexation.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Merryweather, with what seemed a rather elaborately cheerful expression. "My letter? It is from Cousin Anna Belleville. She tells me that Claud has been with her at Bar Harbor for some time, and that he is coming to visit us on his way back. He will be here some day next week, she thinks."

A certain pensiveness stole over the aspect of the Merryweathers. Bell and Gertrude exchanged a swift glance, but said nothing.

Gerald whistled, "Wrap me up in my tarpaulin jacket!"

After a brief silence, Mr. Merryweather said, thoughtfully, "I was thinking of taking the boys off on a camping trip next week."

"You cannot, Miles," said his wife, quickly. "It is out of the question."

"Oh, certainly," said Mr. Merryweather. "I only — a — quite so!"

He relapsed into inarticulate murmurs over his pipe. Mrs. Merryweather, after a reproachful glance at him, turned to Gerald, as she folded her letter. "You have a letter from Claud, Gerald?" she asked, cheerfully.

"I have, madam," said Gerald, with a brow of thunder. "He informs me that he is looking forward with the greatest pleasure to roughing it a bit with us, and says that we must make no preparations, but let him take things just as they are. He's a Christian soul, that's what he is."

"What is to be the order of the evening?"

asked Mrs. Merryweather, addressing Bell with a shade of warning in her voice. "Are we to have games, or boat-building?"

"Oh! boat-building! the regatta is to-morrow, and we are not half ready."

There was a general rush toward cupboards and lockers, and in an incredibly short space of time the whole room was a pleasant litter of chips, shingles, and brown paper. The rules for the regattas at Merryweather were few and simple. All boats must be built by their owners, unaided; no boat must be over a foot long from stem to stern; all sails must be of paper. Aside from these limitations, the fancies of the campers might roam at will; accordingly, the boats were of every shape and description, from Kitty's shingle, ballasted with pebbles, to Phil's elaborate catamaran. Peggy was struggling with a stout and somewhat "nubbly" piece of wood, which was slowly shaping itself under the vigorous strokes of her jack-knife.

"She's coming on!" Peggy declared, cheerfully. "She really begins to look quite like a boat now, doesn't she, Mr. Merryweather?"

"Certainly!" the Chief assented. "I don't see why she should not make a very good boat, Peggy. I would round off her stern a bit, if I were you. So! that's better."

"What is her name, Peggy?" inquired Mrs. Merryweather. "I must be entering the names in the Log."

"The *Lovely Peggy*, of course!" said Phil. "What else should it be?"

"It might be the *Limavaddy!*" said Gerald.

"Gerald, I *wish* you would tell me what you mean by 'Limavaddy,'" said Peggy. "It sounds like — I don't know what; tea-caddy, or something like that. Mrs. Merryweather, won't you tell me what it means?"

"It is a compliment he is paying you, Peggy," said her hostess, smiling. "Peg of Limavaddy is the charming heroine of a charming ballad of Thackeray's.

"'This I do declare,
Happy is the laddy
Who the heart can share
Of Peg of Limavaddy.
Married if she were,
Blest would be the daddy
Of the children fair
Of Peg of Limavaddy.
Beauty is not rare
In the land of Paddy,
Fair beyond compare
Is Peg of Limavaddy.'

That is not one of the prettiest stanzas, but it shows you why Gerald has nicknamed you."

"I say with Captain Corcoran," Gerald observed, pausing in the critical adjustment of a sail:

"'Though I'm anything but clever,
I could talk like that forever.'

As thus!

"When she makes the tea,
Brews it from a caddy,
Who so blithe as she,
Peg of Limavaddy?

"See her o'er the stove,
Broiling of a haddie;
Thus she won my love,
Peg of Limavaddy.

"But building of a boat,
Her success is shady;
Bet you she won't float,
Peg of Limavady!"

"Wait till to-morrow," cried Peggy, laughing, "and you'll see whether she floats or not. And anyhow, she is my first boat. Isn't there a special class for beginners, Mr. Merryweather?"

"No, no! no fear or favor shown; the rigor of the game, little Peggy. Margaret, have you given up?"

"Oh, yes, please, Mr. Merryweather!" said Margaret, looking up from her knitting with a smile. "I could not; it simply was not possible. Gerald was positive at first that he could teach me, but after one lesson he was equally positive that he could not. I needed no conviction, because I knew I could not."

"Nobody can do absolutely everything," said Gerald, "except the Codger, — I allude to my revered uncle, Margaret, — and I have at times desired to drown him for that qualification. You shall be the starter, Margaret; you'll do that to perfection."

"What are the duties of a starter?" asked Margaret; "I shall be very glad to do anything I really can."

"To sit still and look pretty!" said Gerald, demurely. "I *think* you can manage it."

"Have I the full list?" asked Mrs. Merryweather. "I'll read it aloud.

"The *Principal Whale*, — Papa."

"I wish you would not call my father names!" murmured Gerald.

"Jerry, do be still!

"The *Tintinnabula*, Bell.

"The *Jollycumpop*, Gertrude.

"The *Come-at-a-Body*, Gerald.

"The *Molasses Cooky*, Phil.

"The *Polly Cologne*, Kitty.

"The *Whopper*, Willy."

"Is that all?"

"All but Peggy's," said Gertrude. "Peggy, you must decide on the name of your boat."

"Oh! Gertrude, that is the hardest part of all. Margaret, you must name her for me."

"Why not *Semiramis*, after the happy mother of the puppies?" suggested Margaret.

"The whole puppies!" echoed Gerald. "Don't half name them, Margaret!"

"Why isn't that the name for the boat?" cried Phil.

"It is! it is!" cried all the rest. "The *Whole Puppy*, it is!" And Peggy laughing, submitted.

"I never *was* so teased in all my life!" she said; "but I feel it doing me good."

"That is our one object, my charming child!" said Gerald, gravely. "We invited you here in the hope that our united efforts

might counteract the pernicious influences of Fernley House."

"Nobody will ever explain to me what a Come-at-a-Body is!" said Margaret. "Whenever I ask, you all say, 'Oh, hush! it might come!' Mrs. Merryweather, won't you tell me?"

"I will read you the description of it in the Log," said Mrs. Merryweather, smiling; "that is the best I can do for you."

She turned over the pages of the book that lay open in her lap. "Here it is!" she said. "Now mark and learn, Margaret.

"'The Come-at-a-Body is found only in its native habitat, where it may be observed at the proper season, indulging in the peculiar actions that characterize it. It has more arms than legs, and more hair than either. It moves with great rapidity, its gait being something between a wallop and a waddle; and as it comes (one of its peculiarities is that it always comes, and never goes), it

utters loud screams, and gnashes its teeth in time with its movements.'

"Now, my dear, you know all that I do!" Mrs. Merryweather concluded with a candid smile.

"Thank you so much!" said Margaret, laughing. "I am certainly enlightened."

At this moment Phil, who was sitting near the door, laid down his work, and held up a warning hand. "Hark!" he said. "What is that?"

"Only the wind!" said some one.

"Or the car rattling o'er the stony street!" said another.

"No!" said Phil. "I heard a voice, I am sure. Listen!"

All were silent. Outside the rain was pouring, the wind wailing in long sighing gusts; but — yes! mingling with the wind, a voice was certainly calling:

"Hallo! hallo, there! Merryweather!"

Gerald sprang to his feet, and struck his

twin brother on the shoulder. "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson!" he cried. "I should know that voice in the shock of spears: it is Claud Belleville!"

CHAPTER IX.

MR. BELLEVILLE

THE Montforts and Jack Ferrers looked up with much curiosity and some apprehension as the twins returned ushering in the unexpected visitor. Mr. and Mrs. Merryweather and the girls welcomed him cordially, but Margaret could not help contrasting their somewhat subdued cheerfulness with the joyous outburst that had welcomed herself and Peggy on their arrival.

Mr. Claud Belleville was a tall, pallid youth, with blond hair carefully arranged, pale blue eyes, in one of which an eyeglass was neatly fitted, and a languid air. He spoke with a pronounced English accent, and, on being presented to the other guests, said

"MR. CLAUD BELLVILLE WAS A TALL, PALLID YOUTH."

"Oh! very, very, very!" in a most affable tone.

The Merryweathers bestirred themselves, some bringing dry garments, some preparing a hasty meal; the guest meanwhile stood in the centre of the hearthstone, and adjured them not to put themselves to inconvenience.

"Now, my dear people, I beg of you!" he said. "Nothing, positively nothing, but a biscuit and a cup of tea! Really, now, I cannot allow it. Thanks, Jerry! awfully good of you, don't you know! oh! very, very, very! now, my dear fellow, *not* your best coat! It is too absurd."

"It isn't my best, it's my worst!" said Gerald, bluntly.

"Oh! very good! very diverting! thanks awfully! don't mention it. Well, Cousin Miranda, this is charming; this is positively charming. So delightfully primitive, don't you know! oh, very, very, very! I told my people that before I went back to Paris I must

positively look you up. It is such an age since I have seen any of you. My little cousins are all grown up into young ladies, and such charming young ladies: I congratulate you, Cousin, *de tout mon cœur!*"

"Thank you, Claud!" said Mrs. Merryweather, quietly. "I trust your mother is quite well? I only received her note, and Gerald yours, to-day. She spoke of your coming next week; if we had known that you were coming to-night, we would have sent to the station for you."

"Ah, yes; I knew that!" said Mr. Belleville. "I know your hospitality never fails, Cousin Miranda. But you know me, too — a butterfly — here to-day, gone to-morrow! A summons from the Dunderblincks — races going on at their place, don't you know; midsummer *fêtes*, that sort of thing — changed my plans. Mamma said, 'You will have to give up the Camp, *Chéri!*' 'No!' I said. 'They expect me; I have passed my word, it

is all I have. I go to the Camp to-day.' I came—I saw—I dare not say I conquered!" Here he bowed, and threw a killing glance at Gertrude, who was passing at the moment, carrying the teapot.

"*Can* this be the little Gertrude?" he added, addressing her, and lowering his voice to a sentimental half-tone. "She has not forgotten Cousin Claud?"

"Certainly not, Claud!" replied Gertrude, smiling. "It is only three years since you were with us at home for two or three weeks. I remember you perfectly."

"Only three years!" murmured Mr. Belleville. "Is it possible? but what momentous years! The change from the *petite fille*, the charming child, to the woman, the—but I must not say too much!"

"You'll burn your bloom—your boots, if you stand so near the fire!" said Gerald, in a growl so threatening that Margaret looked up startled.

"*Your* boots, dear fellow!" Mr. Belleville corrected him. "Right! I am a little near the cheerful blaze. I am a fire-worshipper, you know; oh, very, very, very!"

"Boys, you'd better see to the boats before you go to bed!" said Mr. Merryweather, speaking for the first time since his greeting of the newcomer.

"All right, sir!" said the twins, rising with alacrity. "Jack, will you come along?"

"Always thoughtful, Cousin Miles!" said Mr. Belleville. "Always the prop of the family! so unchanged!"

Mr. Merryweather's reply was inarticulate, and its tone caused his wife to begin hastily a series of inquiries for the visitor's family.

The twins and Jack Ferrers walked slowly down the slip in the rain. No one spoke till they reached the float; then Gerald said slowly: "Sapolio — Saccarappa — Sarcophagus — *Squedunk!*"

"Feel better?" asked his brother, sympathetically.

"There is one thing," said Gerald, still speaking slowly and emphatically, "that I wish, in this connection, distinctly understood. Indoors he is safe: hospitality — salt — Arabs — that kind of thing. But if in the immediate proximity of the cleansing flood" — he waved his hand toward the lake — "he continues to patronize the parents, in he goes! I have spoken!"

"I should not presume to restrain my half-hour elder!" said Phil. "Jack, I'm afraid we shall have to put this curled darling in your tent. It's only for the night, fortunately."

"Oh! of course! delighted!" said Jack, somewhat embarrassed.

"Very, very, very, eh?" said Phil. "Oh! what's the use of making believe, with any one we know so well as you? It's a nuisance, and we don't pretend it isn't."

"Mark my words, John Ferrers!" broke in Gerald. "We mean to be civil to this youth. He is our second cousin, and we know it. He is also a blooming, blossoming, burgeoning Ass, and he doesn't know it. They seldom do. We mean, I say, to be civil to him, barring patronage of the parents. He has been our thorn, and we have borne him — at intervals, mercifully not too short — all our lives. But we aren't going to pretend that we love him, because we don't. No more doesn't he love us.

"The love that's lost between us
Is not the love for me;
But there's a flood both fair and broad,
In which I'd duck my charming Claud
As gladly as could be!"

* * * * * * *

"Are you ready?" asked the Chief.

"Oh! no, Pater! not just yet. My rudder has got fouled with the cargo."

"Somebody lend me a safety-pin, please! my mainsail is coming loose."

"Has anybody got any ballast to spare? just one pebble!"

These cries and many others resounded from the float, where the campers were gathered, and were putting the last touches to their toy boats. Finally Mr. Merryweather declared that there should be no more delay. The boats were carefully placed in the Ark, a great white rowboat manned by the Chief and Phil, who proceeded to row out leisurely to a white-flagged buoy at some distance from the shore. Gerald and Jack in one canoe, Gertrude and Peggy in another, were stationed at either side of the course; while Margaret and Claud Belleville, in a Rangeley boat, were so placed as to take the time of the various boats as they came in. This arrangement was not satisfactory to all the campers, but when protests were made in the family council the night before, Mr. Merryweather had calmly

remarked that it was impossible to please everybody, and that the visitors should be given the post of honor. Gerald muttered that he did not see why Margaret should be butchered to make a Claudian holiday; to which his father replied that the matter was settled, and perhaps he, Gerald, would better be seeing to the lanterns.

"Aren't you a little hard on the boy?" asked Mrs. Merryweather, when she and her husband were left alone together.

"He needs something to bite on!" was the reply. "He is going through a kind of moral teething."

This regatta was the first that Margaret had ever seen, and she was greatly excited.

"Tell us when we are just right!" she cried to the Chief as she passed the Ark. "Oh! anchor by the red flag? yes, I remember, you told me before. Now, Mr. Belleville, will you throw out the anchor, please?"

"Must I?" rejoined Mr. Belleville. "It seems a pity! So charming to row about a bit, don't you think? oh! well, if you insist!" —as he met Margaret's horrified gaze. "Here goes!"

The anchor splashed overboard, and the young man laid down his oars.

"You take this *au grand sérieux*, I see, Miss Montfort, like my good cousins themselves. I confess I never can attain their perennial youthfulness, try how I will. I feel a Methuselah, I give you my word I do. Oh! very, very, very!"

"I don't understand you," said Margaret, simply. "We are here to take the time, as the boats pass the line. There is no other object in our being here."

"No other? Alas! poor Claud!" sighed Mr. Belleville. "Now, to me, Miss Montfort, the sailing of toy boats is the smallest possible factor in this afternoon's pleasure. It is not, believe me, the childish sport

that I shall remember when I am far away."

"Oh!" said Margaret, vaguely, her eyes on the white boat.

"You do not ask what it is that I shall carry with me across the ocean?" Claud's voice dropped to its favorite smooth half-tone, what he was fond of describing to his friends as "*ma mi-voix caressante.*"

"There is a glamour, Miss Montfort, a magic, that does not always put itself into words. The perfect day, the perfect vision, will dwell with me —"

"Oh, look!" cried Margaret, starting forward, eagerly, "they are giving the signal. Gerald repeats it. Oh, they are off! Look, look, Mr. Belleville! What a pretty sight."

It was, indeed, a pretty sight. The fairy fleet started in line, their white and brown sails taking the breeze gallantly, their prows (where they had prows) dancing over the dancing ripples. One or two proved unruly,

turning round and round, and in one case finally turning bottom side up, with hardly a struggle. But most of the little vessels kept fairly well within the course, heading, more or less, for the shore.

Margaret was enchanted.

"How wonderfully they keep together!" she said. "Oh! but now they begin to separate. Look, there is a poor little one wobbling off all by itself. I wonder — I am afraid it is Peggy's. Yes, I am sure it is. Poor Peggy! Oh! the first three are going much faster than the rest. I wonder whose they are. How prettily they sail! Did you ever see anything prettier?"

"I see something infinitely prettier," said Mr. Belleville, fixing his eyes on his companion. But Margaret, wholly unconscious of his languishing gaze, was watching the race with an intensity of eagerness that left no room for any other impressions.

The three forward boats came on swiftly,

their prows dipping lightly, their paper sails spread full to the breeze. Shouts came ringing over the water, from the other boats, and from the shore, where the rest of the campers were gathered in an excited knot.

"*Jollycumpop!*"

"*Come-at-a-Body!*"

"Good work, *Jolly!* Keep it up!"

"The *Whale* is gaining. Hit her up, Spermaceti!"

"*Jollycumpop* has it! *Jollycumpop!*"

"The *Jolly is* first," cried Margaret; "but the *Come-at-a-Body* is very, very close. Which do you think will win, Mr. Belleville?"

"Which do you wish to win?" asked Mr. Belleville.

"Oh, how can I tell? One is Gertrude's, the other Gerald's."

"There can be little doubt in that case, I imagine," said Claud Belleville, with a peculiar smile. "As a matter of simple gallantry — dear me, how unfortunate!"

As he spoke, his oar slipped from his hand, and fell with a splash into the water. The *Come-at-a-Body* was nearest to the Rangeley boat. The oar did not absolutely touch the tiny vessel, but the shock of the disturbed water was enough to check her gallant progress. She paused, — wavered, — finally recovered herself, and went bravely on. But in that pause the *Jollycumpop* crossed the line triumphantly, amid loud acclamations.

"The little Gertrude wins!" exclaimed Mr. Belleville, recovering his oar with graceful composure. "We can hardly regret an accident which contributes even slightly to give the victory where it so manifestly belongs, can we, Miss Montfort?"

But Margaret Montfort turned upon him, her fair face flushed with anger, her gentle eyes full of fire.

"Mr. Belleville, you dropped that oar on purpose!" she said, quietly.

"How can you suspect me of such a

thing?" replied Mr. Belleville, laughing. "But, *quand même!* would it have been wholly unjustifiable if I had done so?"

"Wholly, to my mind!" said Margaret. "In fact, I cannot imagine such a thing being done by any one who—" she checked herself.

"By any one who is related to these dear people?" said Mr. Belleville, lightly. "Ah! Miss Montfort, a bond of blood does not always mean a bond of sympathy. These dear people bore me, and I bore them. Believe me, it is reciprocal. But do you yourself never tire of this everlasting childishness, these *jeux d'enfance*, on the part of persons who, after all, are mostly beyond the nursery?"

"I do not!" said Margaret, concisely. "If you will take in the anchor, Mr. Belleville, I think I should like to go ashore, if you please."

"I have offended you!" cried Claud Belle-

ville. "You, to whom from the first instant I have felt so irresistibly drawn. I am unfortunate, indeed. But you cannot be seriously angry. Give me a chance to redeem myself, I implore you, Miss Montfort. See what a charming little cove opens yonder, just opposite. Delightful to drift and dream for an hour, in the company of one who understands — oh, very, very, very."

"I do not understand," said Margaret, "and I have no desire to do so, Mr. Belleville. I beg you to take me ashore at once, — this moment."

"And if I were bold enough to delay obedience for a few moments? If I felt confident that I could overcome this stern — "

"Gertrude," called Margaret, as the owner of the victorious *Jollycumpop* passed them with a triumphant greeting, "can you give us a tow?"

"Certainly," said Gertrude. "Anything wrong?"

"On the contrary, dear cousin," said Claud, "I challenge you to a race."

And with a glance at Margaret, half reproachful, half mocking, he bent to his oars, with the first sign of energy he had shown since his arrival.

CHAPTER X.

PUPPY PLAY

"BELL, may I speak to you a moment?" said Margaret.

Bell looked up from a critical inspection of the *Tintinnabula*, which had been somewhat injured in the race. "Certainly, May Margaret!" she said. "Do you want to know why my poor boatie did not win? I have just found out." Then, looking up, and seeing Margaret's disturbed face, she rose instantly.

"Something is wrong?" she said, quickly. "Come this way, under the trees, where it is quiet. You have had no bad news, dear?"

"Oh, no!" said Margaret. "But — Bell, I have something very disagreeable to tell you. It seems terrible to say anything that may make trouble, but nothing makes so

much trouble as untruth, and I do think you ought to know this. I don't think the *Jolly-cumpop* really won the race!"

"My dear Margaret! she came in well ahead; didn't you see —"

"Listen, Bell!" and Margaret told in a few words the story of the dropped oar.

Bell listened with keen attention, and when Margaret had finished, whistled two bars of the Siegfried *motif* very correctly before she spoke.

"The little animal!" she said at last. "Well, Margaret, do you know, the best thing to do, in my opinion, is — to say nothing about it, at present."

"But — Bell! Gerald really won!"

"I know! but, even as it is, Jerry can hardly keep his hands off Claud. My one prayer is that we may be able to get the boy off to-morrow without an open quarrel breaking out. You see, Margaret, when they were little, it was all right for Jerry to thrash

him. He did it punctually and thoroughly, every time they met, and it was very good for the boy; but now of course it is out of the question."

"Why did he come here?" inquired Margaret. "Did ever any one manage to make so much trouble in so short a time? the very air seems changed."

Bell shrugged her shoulders. "His mother made him come, probably," she said. "He is really devoted to his mother; when you see him with her, you forgive a great deal. She is very fond of my father, and is always hoping that he may be able to influence Claud, and to appreciate him. After all, the boy has no father, and he has been systematically spoiled ever since he was born. I wish to-morrow were over."

"Then," said Margaret, slowly, "I am to say nothing about this matter."

"Please not!" said her friend. "My dear, I see you are troubled, because you saw the

horrid thing done; and you don't think it right to conceal the truth, even for a time. I am just as angry as you, but remember, there is 'a time to speak and a time to be silent.' This is a time to be silent, I am very sure; if we were to tell the boys now, it would be a match thrown into a powder-magazine. To-morrow, when Claud is safely off to his Dunderblincks, we will tell them; there will be an explosion then, but it will do no harm; and in a day or two the two boats can have a race by themselves, and that will decide the case. Are you convinced, Justitia?"

"Entirely!" said Margaret. "You are very wise, Bell; I suppose I was too angry to see clearly; I have never been so angry in my life. As you say, I suppose it is because I saw it; and it *was* a horrid thing to see. I too wish to-morrow were over."

The morrow came, and the morning passed peacefully enough. The wagon was ordered

which was to carry the visitor to the evening train. The elders began to breathe freely, and it was with a mind comparatively at rest that Mr. Merryweather strolled down to the float after dinner, to inspect a boat which had been hauled up for repairs. The other "menfolks" of the family followed him, and all stood round after the fashion of their kind, saying little, but enjoying themselves in their own way.

"I'd caulk her a bit, Jerry," said the Chief; "and then give her a couple of coats of shellac. She'll do then for the rest of the season."

"All right, Pater!" said Jerry.

"And if it be possible," his father went on, "so far as in you lies, do not spill the shellac about. Shellac is an excellent thing in its place, but I don't like it on the seat of my chair, where I found it this morning, nor sprinkled over the new 'Century,' as it was last night. And it

isn't as if there were any to spare; the can is very low."

"I know!" said Gerald, penitently. "I am awfully sorry, Pater. I threw a cushion at Fergs, and it upset the can. I scraped up as much as I could; I think there is enough left for this job. If not, would that varnish do?"

"Varnish —" said Mr. Merryweather; and he plunged into a dissertation upon the abominations of most varnishes and the iniquities of their makers. Gerald replied, defending certain kinds for certain purposes; the others chimed in, and a heated discussion was going on, when Claud Belleville joined the party. In spotless gray tweeds, with a white Manila hat and a lavender necktie, he made a singular contrast to the campers in their flannel shirts and dingy corduroys.

At his appearance, Gerald rose from his squatting posture at the stern of the boat, while Phil and Jack amiably made way for

the newcomer at the edge of the wharf, where, for some unexplained reason, men always like to stand. Claud, finding himself between Gerald and his father, turned toward the latter with an air of cheerful benevolence.

"Cousin Miles," he said, "you must promise me, you really must, to come to us at Bar Harbor before the end of the summer. I gave my word to Mamma that I would induce you to come. She longs to see you."

"I should like very much to see her," said Mr. Merryweather. "We were always very good friends, your mother and I. Give her my love, and tell her that some time when she is in New York I shall run on to see her; possibly this autumn, before you sail. It would not be possible for me to leave here now."

"Oh, but yes!" cried Mr. Belleville, airily. "It could be possible, Cousin Miles. Here are the boys, absolutely *au fait* in bog-trotting of every description; in fact, suited to the life

— in all its aspects." He swept Gerald with a comprehensive glance, from his mop of red hair, tanned into rust-color, to his feet, clad in superannuated "sneakers."

"They can do all the honors of the place as they should be done," he added. "But you, Cousin Miles, you must positively come to Bar Harbor. You live too much the life of the fields. Mamma is constantly deploring it. We will show you a little life, Mamma and I. I will put you up at my Club, and take you out in my new auto; in a week, you will not know yourself, I give you my word. Oh, very, very, very!"

As the speaker stood beaming benevolence at Mr. Merryweather, and diffusing contempt among the rest of the party, two hands were laid on his shoulders; hands which gripped like steel, and propelled him forward with irresistible force. He staggered, struggled to save himself — and the next instant disappeared with a loud splash beneath the water.

Gerald confronted his father with a face of white fire.

"I told him, sir, plainly and distinctly, that if he patronized you I should duck him!" he said. "He has had fair warning: this has gone on long enough."

"Gerald," said Mr. Merryweather, gravely, "you are behaving like a foolish and ill-tempered child. I am fully able to take care of myself. We will talk of this later. Meantime you will apologize to your cousin."

"Oh, certainly, sir! I intended to, of course."

While this brief colloquy had been going on, Phil and Jack, with sparkling eyes, waited at the edge of the wharf for the reappearance of Mr. Belleville. Up he came presently, splashing and sputtering, his eyes flashing angry sparks. Phil held out a hand; a vigorous pull, a scramble, and he stood once more on the wharf. Gerald walked up to him at once. "I beg your pardon, Claud!"

he said. "I had no business to do it, and I apologize."

Claud gave a spiteful laugh, and shook himself in his cousin's direction, spattering him with drops. "Don't mention it, dear fellow!" he said, through his chattering teeth. "It serves me right for expecting civilized manners in the backwoods. This no doubt appears to you an exquisite pleasantry, and its delicacy will be appreciated, no doubt, by others of your circle. *Enfin*, in the presence of your father, whom I respect, I can but accept your apology. Since you are sorry —"

"I did not say I was sorry!" Gerald broke in. "I said I begged your pardon."

"My son, will you go at once and attend to the fire?" said Mr. Merryweather.

"Father —"

"*At once!*" repeated Mr. Merryweather.

Gerald went.

"Phil, take your cousin in, and get him some dry clothes. His own will be dry before

the wagon comes, if you hang them by the kitchen stove. Hurry now!"

Phil and Claud went off in surly silence, and Mr. Merryweather turned to Jack Ferrers, who had remained an amused but somewhat embarrassed spectator of the scene.

"Puppy play, Jack!" he said, quietly. "You have seen plenty of it in Germany. One puppy *is* a puppy, more's the pity, and the other has red hair. Well! well! I did hope this could have been avoided; but we must not let it go any further. I wish Roger were here. I wonder if you can help me out, Jack."

"I'll do my best, sir!" said Jack, heartily.

"You see, I must go off; I ought to be at the village landing this moment, to see about that freight that is coming. Do you think you can keep the peace till I come back?"

"I think I can," said Jack. "I'll make a good try for it, anyhow, Mr. Merryweather."

"That's a good lad!" said the Chief.

"You could knock both their heads together, if you put your mind — and your biceps — to it; but I hope that will not be necessary. In any case, don't let them fight! I promised his mother."

He nodded, and, settling himself in a boat, departed with long, powerful strokes.

Jack, left alone, shook his curly head, and felt of his arms.

"Ah'm fit!" he said, quoting another and a bigger Jock than himself. "But it's a pity. That fellow is not only a puppy, he is a cur. I never saw anybody who needed a thrashing more." And he went and coiled himself in a hammock, and prepared to keep watch.

An hour later Mr. Claud Belleville, once more dry, if somewhat shorn of his glory, reappeared upon the scene. As he came out of his tent, Gerald strolled carelessly out of the boathouse, his hands in his pockets.

"Cousin Rowdy, a word with you, if you please!" said Claud.

"Cousin Cad, two, if you like!" said Gerald.

"In France, where I live," Mr. Belleville resumed. "when we are insulted, we fight."

"No! do you really?" cried Gerald, his eyes sparkling as he began eagerly to turn back his cuffs. "Hooray! I say, shake hands, Claud. I didn't think you had it in you. There's a bully place up behind the woodshed. Come on!"

Claud Belleville, who really was no coward, started forward readily: but at this moment Destiny intervened, in the shape of six foot four of John Ferrers. Uncoiling his length from the hammock, he took two strides forward, and lifting Gerald in his arms as if he were an infant, carried him off bodily. Gerald, who was strong and agile as a young panther, fought and struggled, pouring out a torrent of angry protest; but in vain. When Jack put forth his full strength, there was no possibility of resistance. He bore the furious lad to his

tent, and throwing him on the cot, deliberately sat down on his feet, in calm and cheerful silence. Gerald twisted and writhed, exhausted himself in struggles, threats, prayers; all in vain! Jack sat like a statue. Finally the boy relapsed into sullen silence, and lay panting, his hand clenched, his blue eyes dark with anger and chagrin.

By and by came the sound of wheels; a wagon stopped in front of the camp. There were sounds of leave-taking; "Good-by, Claud!" "Our love to your mother!" in various tones and modulations; then the sound of wheels once more, rattling up the hill and away in the distance. Then Jack Ferrers rose, and smiled down on his prostrate friend.

"Awfully sorry, old man!" he said.

Gerald was silent.

"Jerry! you're not going to cut up rough?"

"I have nothing to say," said Gerald, coldly.

"You are my guest, and manners forbid. We will change the subject, if you please."

"Manners didn't forbid your chucking the Charmer into the drink!" said Jack. "Ho! did you see him blink when he came up? It was worth while, Jerry, even if I have to fight you, but I don't believe I shall. You see, your father had to go off, and he asked me to keep the peace, and I said I would; and I didn't see any other way, wildcat that you are. A sweet condition the Charmer would have been in to go back to his Mamma, if I had not done as I did!"

"I might have known the Pater was at the bottom of it!" said Gerald, his face lightening, and his voice taking on its own kindly ring. "Fine man; but the extent to which he won't let me thrash Claud is simply disgusting. When it comes to setting a Megatherium on a man —"

"And to the Megatherium sitting on the man —" said Jack, laughing.

"No more o' that, Jack, if thou love me! There's the horn! Come on, and let that flint-hearted parent see that we are all right."

The pair strolled in to supper, arm in arm, singing, to the tune of "Home, Sweet Home!"

> "Claud, Claud, sweet, sweet Claud!
> There's no ass like Claud,
> There is no ass like Claud!"

and were promptly silenced by Mrs. Merryweather.

CHAPTER XI.

MRS. MERRYWEATHER'S VIGIL

MRS. MERRYWEATHER had had a busy day. There had been a picnic at Oak Island, which had taken all the morning and a good part of the afternoon; then there had been a dozen letters to write for the late mail; and finally she had taken Kitty's turn with Willy at getting supper, as Kitty had a headache. The sisters protested, each one claiming her right to take the extra duty; but Mrs. Merryweather had her own reasons for being glad of the hour of play-work with her little boy. Willy had been rather out of spirits, which meant that he, as well as his sister, had eaten too many huckleberries; this afternoon he

had been decidedly cross, and required treatment.

Coming into the kitchen at five o'clock, she found the fire lighted, and the kettle on, for Willy was a faithful soul; but he was frowning heavily over his chopping-tray.

"I wish mince-meat had never been invented!" he said, gloomily.

"Do you?" said his mother. "I don't! I am glad it was, even if I did not have three helps last night."

"I was so hungry, I had to eat something," said Willy, in an injured tone. "When I grow up, I mean to have beefsteak every day, and never have anything made over at all."

"I'll remember that, the next time we have brown-bread brewis!" said his mother smiling.

"Oh! that's different!" said Willy.

"Most things are different," said Mrs. Merryweather, "if you look at them in a different way. Is that ready, son?"

"As ready as it is ever going to be. I've chopped till my arm is almost broken."

"So I see! It looks as if you had cracked it. Well, now, it isn't time yet to make the rolls, so we can take breath a bit. Come out on the porch, and let us play something till the kettle boils."

"I don't feel like playing!" said Willy, dolefully; "I don't feel like doing anything, Mammy."

Mrs. Merryweather looked at him a moment; then taking his hands in hers, she said suddenly, "'For heaven's sake let us sit upon the ground, and tell sad stories of the death of kings!' That is a passage from Richard II., and it seems to fit the occasion. Sit down, Willy; right here on the floor by me; I'll begin. Two minutes for composition!"

She was silent, looking out over the water, while Willy glanced sidewise at her, half-interested in spite of himself.

"I have it!" she said, presently.

"King John put on such frightful airs,
He met his death by eating pears.

"Your turn, Willy! two minutes!"

"Oh, Mammy, I can't play!"

"But you *are* playing. Only one minute more."

"Well, then — does it have to be the real way they died? because I don't know."

"No! facts not required in this game."

"Well, then —

"King Og
Was lost in a bog."

"Your metre is faulty," said his mother, thoughtfully, "but the statement is interesting. My turn; you shall hold the watch for me."

"Time's up!" cried Willy, beginning to kindle.

"Oh! is it? What short minutes! Let me see!

"King Xerxes
Was killed by Turkses."

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"Oh! I wanted Xerxes. Wait, Mammy. I have one!

"King David
Could not be savèd!"

"Good!" cried his mother. "That is the best yet. But we might branch out a little, I think, Willy. This condensed couplet is forcible, but not very graceful. How do you like this?

"Tiglath-pileser, Tiglath-pileser,
He tried to buy a lemon-squeezer;
But no such thing had e'er been seen,
So in a melancholy green,
Oh, very green, and very yellow,
He pined away and died, poor fellow!"

"That is splendid," said Willy, "but you took a little more than two minutes. My turn now!

"The great and mighty Alexander
Was bit to death by a salamander."

"*Done* to death is more poetic!" said his mother.

"Yes, but 'bit' is more savage. I like 'bit.' Your time's up, Mammy!"

"Oh! Willy, I am going to give you a subtle one this time; one in which something is left to the imagination.

"The Emperor Domitian
Consulted a physician!"

"But you didn't kill him."

"No, but the physician did."

"Really?"

"No, not really. What do you think of this game?"

"I think it's bully. Did you really just make it up, Mammy?"

"Just! Now the kettle is boiling, and we must come in; but as we go, let me inform you that —

"The Emperor Tiberius
He died of something serious;

But now we'll stop,
And make the pop-
Ov*ers* before we weary us!"

Willy's gloom was effectually banished, and he continued to slaughter kings till the supper-horn blew.

The effect of this and other mental exercises, added to a cup of tea, was such that when bed-time came, Mrs. Merryweather found herself singularly wide awake. In vain she counted hundreds; in vain she ransacked her memory for saints, kings, and cities alphabetically arranged; in vain she made a list of Johns, beginning with the Baptist and ending with John O'Groats; the second hundred found her wider awake than ever, as she tossed on her narrow cot. Mr. Merryweather, in the opposite cot, was breathing deep and regularly; he was sound asleep, at least, and that was a good thing. Other than this, no sound broke the perfect stillness of the night. The full moon rode high, and lake and woodland

were flooded with silver light. A glorious night! Mrs. Merryweather sighed; what was the use of staying in bed on such a night as this, when one could not sleep? If only there were some excuse for getting up!

Suddenly she remembered that, the night being very warm, and the two children apparently entirely recovered from their slight indisposition, they had been allowed to sleep out on the Point, in accordance with a promise made some days ago by their father. She had not been quite willing, but had yielded to pressure, and they had gone out, very happy, with their blankets and the india-rubber floor-cloth.

Mrs. Merryweather sat up in bed. "I ought to go and see if those chicks are all right!" she said. "After all, they certainly were not quite well this afternoon, whatever Miles may say." She glanced half-defiantly at the other cot, but Miles said nothing. She rose quietly, put on wrapper and slippers, and opening

noiselessly the screen-door of the tent, slipped out into the open, and stood for a moment looking about her. How beautiful it was! what a wonderful silver world! Sleep was good, but surely, to be awake, on such a night as this, was better.

She stole past the other tents, pausing an instant at the door of each to listen for the regular breathing which is the sweetest music a mother can hear; then she made her way out to the Point, through the sweet tangle of fern and berry-bushes, under the bending trees that dropped dew on her head as she passed.

The Point lay like the prow of some great vessel in a silver sea. One tall pine stood for the mast; under this pine, rolled in scarlet blankets, their rosy faces turned toward the moon, lay the children, sound asleep. Willy had curled one arm under his head, and his other hand was locked in his sister's.

"Dear little things!" murmured their mother. "That means that Kitty-my-pretty

was a little bit frightened before she went to sleep. Dear little things!"

She stood there for some time looking down at them.

"The moon is full on their faces!" she said. "My old nurse would tell me that they would be moonstruck 'for sartain sure!' How terrified I used to be, lest a ray of moonlight should shine on my bed, and I should wake a lunatic!"

She glanced up at the moon; looked again, and yet again. "That is very singular!" said Mrs. Merryweather. "Something seems to be happening to the moon."

Something *was* happening to the moon. It was as if a piece had been bitten out of the shining round. Was it a little cloud? no! no cloud could possibly look like that, so black, so thick, so — "Good gracious!" said Mrs. Merryweather; "it is an eclipse!"

An eclipse it certainly was. Slowly, surely, the black shadow crept, crept, over the silver

disk; now a quarter of its surface was hidden; now it went creeping, creeping on toward the half.

"It is going to be a total eclipse!" said Mrs. Merryweather. "I suppose I ought to wake some of them."

She stood a moment more, looking irresolutely at the sleeping children. "I cannot possibly wake them!" she said at last. "Little lambs! they are sleeping so beautifully, and they certainly were *not* quite themselves this afternoon. Besides, there will be plenty more eclipses; I'll go and wake some of the others."

The black shadow crept on. Hardly less silent, Mrs. Merryweather paused before the tent where her daughters slept. Bell and Gertrude scorned cots, and their mattresses were spread on the floor at night, and rolled up in the daytime. There the two girls lay, still and placid, statue-like, save for the gentle heaving of their quiet breasts. A fair

picture for a mother to look on. Miranda Merryweather looked, and drew a happy breath; looked again, and shook her head. "I cannot wake them!" she murmured to herself. "They are both tired after that expedition; Bell paddled very hard on the way back; she was much more flushed than I like to see her, when she came in. And Gertrude sleeps so lightly, I fear she might not get to sleep again if I were to wake her now."

The black shadow crept on; the mother crept into the boys' tent, and stood beside Gerald's cot. The lad lay with his arms flung wide apart; his curly hair was tossed over his broad open forehead; his clear-cut features were set as if in marble.

"He has such a beautiful forehead!" said Mrs. Merryweather. "He sleeps so very sound, that if I were to wake him he might not be able to sleep again. Dear Jerry!"

She moved over to Phil's cot: Phil was uneasy, and as she stopped to straighten the

bedclothes, he turned on his side, muttering something that sounded like "Bother breakfast!"

"Poor laddie!" said Mrs Merryweather. "He looks as if he might have a headache. I wish I had made him take a nice little cup of hot malted milk before he went to bed. It is out of the question to wake him, when he is sleeping so uneasily."

She left the tent, with hardly a glance toward Jack Ferrers, who lay in the farthest cot. The idea of waking him, and having him disturb her own boys, was too preposterous to be entertained for an instant.

The black shadow had crept entirely over the moon; no silver disk now, only a shield of dull bronze; "like some of the Pompeiian bronzes!" Mrs. Merryweather thought. "It is very extraordinary. I suppose I really *ought* to wake Miles."

She entered her own tent, and stood by her husband's cot. Miles Merryweather was

sleeping quite as soundly as any of his children; in fact, he was a very statue of sleep; but his wife laid her hand gently on his shoulder. "Miles!" she said; it must be confessed that she did not speak very loud. "Miles, there is an eclipse!"

Mr. Merryweather did not stir.

"Miles! do you want to wake up?"

No reply; no motion of the long, still form. Mrs. Merryweather breathed more freely. "Miles was more tired to-night than I have seen him all summer!" she said. "He cannot remember that we are not twenty-five any more. It is very bad for a man to get overtired when he is no longer young. Well, I certainly did try to wake him; but such a *very* sound sleep as this shows how much he needed it. I am sure it is much more important for him to sleep than to see the eclipse; it isn't as if he had not seen plenty of eclipses in his life. Of course, if it had been the sun, it would have been different."

She stood at the door of the tent, watching. Slowly, slowly, the black shadow passed; slowly, slowly, the silver crescent widened to a broad arc, and finally to the perfect argent round; once more the whole world lay bathed in silver light. Mrs. Merryweather gazed on peacefully, and murmured under her breath certain words that she loved:

> "'Queen and huntress, chaste and fair,
> Now the sun is gone to sleep,
> Seated in thy silver chair,
> State in wonted measure keep.
> Hesperus entreats thy light,
> Goddess excellently bright!'

"But if Roger had been here," said Miranda Merryweather, "I should certainly have waked him, because he is a scientific man, and it would have been only right!"

CHAPTER XII.

"SHOULD AULD ACQUAINTANCE BE FORGOT —"

"A wet sheet and a flowing sea,
A wind that follows fast —"

PHIL MERRYWEATHER was singing as he brought his boat about. "Slacken your sheet, Peggy! easy — that's right! a half-hitch — look here, young lady! I believe you have been humbugging us all; don't tell me you never sailed a boat before!"

"Never in all my life!" said Peggy, looking up joyously. "I have only dreamed of it and thought about it, ever since I can remember. And I have read the 'Seaman's Friend,' and 'Two Years Before the Mast,' so I do know a little bit about how things ought to

go. I think every girl ought to learn how to sail a boat, if she possibly can; but out on the ranch, you see, there really wasn't any chance. We could only make believe, but we used to have great fun doing that."

"How did you make your believe? I should like to hear about it. Ease her off a bit — so — as you are!"

"Why, we made a boat out of the great swing in the barn. It is a huge barn, and the swing is big enough for three elephants to swing on at once; and Hugh fastened hammocks along it lengthwise, and then rigged ropes and pulleys for us, and an old canvas hammock with the ends cut off for a sail; so we swung, and called it sailing, and had storms and shipwrecks, and all kinds of adventures. It was great fun. Oh, I do wish some of you could come out to the ranch some day. If there was only water, it would be the best place in the world — except this and Fernley."

"I'm coming some day!" said Phil. "See if I don't. It must be corking sport, riding about over those great plains."

"Oh! it is!" cried Peggy. "When you come, Phil, you shall ride Monte. He is the most beautiful creature, a Spanish jennet. Jack Del Monte sent him to brother Jim, but he isn't up to Jim's weight, so he lets me ride him. He is like the horses in poetry, that is the only way I can describe him; white as milk, with great dark eyes, and graceful — oh, I *do* want you to see him. No horse in poetry was ever half so beautiful; in fact, I think I take back what I said; I don't really think poets know much about horses; do you?"

"'Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed,'" quoted Phil, laughing.

"I know!" said Peggy, indignantly. "Now, the idea, Phil! one thinks of a poor dear horse all over ostrich feathers behind, which is dreadful. But then, I don't understand poetry,

except about battles, Macaulay and Scott. Don't you love 'Marmion'?"

"Indeed I do!" said Phil, heartily. "Hi!"

This last brief exclamation was made in a tone of some concern.

"What is it?" asked Peggy. "Am I trimming wrong?"

"Right as a trivet! but — have you ever heard of a williwaw, Peggy?"

"It's a squall, isn't it? Captain Slocum tells about them in 'Sailing Alone Round the World.'"

"That's it! Well, I think we are going to get one. If you will take the helm again for a moment, I'll take in a reef."

Peggy took the tiller in her strong little brown hand, and looked on admiringly while Phil reefed the sail with creditable swiftness. Soon all was tight, and the two young people watched with cheerful interest the coming on of the squall.

On it came, a line of white on the water, a

gray curtain of driving rain above it. The wind began to sing in the rigging of the sailboat; next moment she heeled heavily over, and sped along with her lee rail under water.

"I'd sit pretty well up to windward if I were you," shouted Phil. "You'll be dryest on the gunwale, if you don't mind!"

As Peggy seated herself with alacrity on the gunwale, Phil looked at her with approval. Her eyes were shining, her whole rosy face alight with happy excitement.

"Now, that's the kind of girl I like to see!" said this young gentleman, forgetting that he had been seeing three of the same kind ever since he could remember; but sisters are different!

"Not so bad, eh?" he said, as he took another turn on the sheet.

"Oh, Phil, it is perfectly splendid! why, we are simply flying! Oh, I wish it was like this all the time."

"Hi!" said Phil again. "Everybody doesn't seem to be of your opinion, Peggy. That boat over there will be in trouble if she doesn't look out. Sapolio! there is something wrong. We'd better run over and see."

At a little distance a small boat was tossing violently on the water; her sail was lowered, and a white handkerchief was fluttering from the stern like a signal of distress.

"Ready about!" said Phil. Peggy crouched down on the seat, the boom swung over, and the gallant little *Petrel* flew swiftly as her namesake to the rescue.

"Anything wrong?" asked Phil, as he ran alongside the crippled boat.

"Broke our rudder!" was the reply, from a pleasant-looking lad; "must have been cracked before we started. If you could lend us a pair of oars — I was very stupid to come out without a pair —"

At this moment a clear, shrill voice was heard above the noise of wind and water, cry-

ing aloud, "My Veezy Vee! my Veezy Vee! It *is* my Veezy Vee! Don't tell me it isn't, for it simply *is!*"

"*Viola!*" cried Peggy. "Vanity! can it be you?"

"Oh, my dear! I was once, perhaps, but with all my crimps out, how can you have the heart? If ever I get ashore alive, —"

"Don't be ridiculous, Viola!" said the lad, in a tone of brotherly tolerance. "You are in no more danger — now — then if you were in bed. Though I admit it might have been rather fussy if we hadn't met you!" he added, with a meaning look at Phil.

"How far have you to go?" asked Phil. "Buffum's Point? Well, now, look here! that will be a long, hard pull against this wind. You'd much better let us tow you down to our camp, and then you can ship a new rudder, and go home any old time when the wind sets right."

The young man hesitated. "Why — you're

awfully good," he said, "but I think we'd better get home —"

"Oh, do, *do* let us go, Tom!" cried the pretty girl who had waved the handkerchief, and who seemed still, somehow, to be waving everything about her. "No, I won't be quiet! It's my Veezy Vee, I tell you; it's Peggy Montfort, and I am simply expiring to talk to her. Besides, if I am going to be drowned, I want to be drowned with another girl. Oh, Peggy, isn't it dreadful? Do you think we shall ever get home alive?"

Here the wind caught her hat, and in a frantic effort to retain it, she very nearly fell overboard. "There!" she cried. "I told you so, Tommy; I knew I should be drowned."

"I never said you wouldn't," replied her brother, with some heat, "if you play such pranks as that. You simply *must* sit still, Vi!"

"Oh, it's all very well to say I must sit still, Tommy Vincent. If *you* had a hat that

was the pride of your life, instead of a felt saucepan, perhaps you wouldn't want to have it carried off and drowned before your eyes. My precious hatty!"

"Why, we are all right, Viola," said Peggy. "It is perfectly splendid, I think. Besides, the worst of it is past. Look! the sky is lightening already; the whole thing will be over soon."

"But I am drenched to the skin!" cried poor Viola. "The rain has gone through and wet my poor bones, I know it has; I shall *never* be dry again, I am convinced, never: there isn't a school-book in the world dry enough to dry me, Peggy, not even Hallam's 'Middle Ages.'"

"Pooh! who cares for a wetting?" said Peggy, shaking herself like a Newfoundland dog. "It only adds to the fun."

"Oh! that's all very well for you, Veezy Vee!" cried poor Viola. "But if *you* had on a silk waist, you would feel differently, I

know you would. And my hat simply *was* the sweetest thing you ever saw; wasn't it, Tom? Sugar was salt beside it; wasn't it, Tom?"

Tom, who had been holding a consultation with Phil over the broken rudder, answered by a brief, though not unfriendly growl, and paid no further attention to her. The painter of his boat was made fast to the *Petrel's* stern, and the latter was soon winging her way toward the Camp, towing the disabled boat behind her.

"Aren't you Vincent of 1903?" asked Phil, leaning over the stern, his hand on the tiller and one eye on the clouds. "Thought so! Used to see you about the yard. My name is Merryweather; 1902."

"Glad to know you!" said Tom Vincent. "I thought it must be you; I used to see you rowing, of course. Your brother —"

He was interrupted by excited squeaks from his sister, who was gazing at Phil with sparkling eyes.

"No!" she cried. "It *can't* be! It would be *too* delicious! *not* Merryweather! Don't ask me to believe it, Peggy, for it simply is beyond my powers. *Not* the Snowy's brother!"

"Yes, indeed!" said Peggy, laughing as she, too, leaned back over the stern. "Let me introduce you; Mr. Philip Merryweather, Miss Viola Vincent."

"Awfully glad!" said Phil, making a motion toward where his hat should have been. "I've often heard my sister speak of you, Miss Vincent."

"Oh! Mr. Merryweather, I *adore* the Snowy!" cried Viola. "She is simply the dearest creature on the face of the earth. I would give the wide world — I would give my very best frill to see her. Don't tell me she is near here, for I should expire with joy; simply expire!"

"I certainly will not," said Phil, smiling, "if the consequences would really be so terri-

ble, Miss Vincent. Otherwise, I might venture to predict that you would see her in about ten minutes. If you feel any untoward symptoms developing, please consider it unsaid!"

"Oh! Tom, isn't it *too* thrilling?" cried Viola. "Oh! Tom, aren't you perfectly *rigid* with excitement? It makes Tom rigid, Mr. Merryweather, and it makes me flutter; we are so different. *Aren't* you rigid, Tommy?"

"Viola, don't be a goose!" said her brother, good-naturedly. "I am not in the least rigid, though I shall be delighted to see Miss Merryweather, of course."

"You can see the camp now, through the trees," said Phil. "There is the flag, just over that tall pine. Flag by day; lantern by night. That is 'Merryweather.' Ready about, Peggy, for the last tack!"

The squall had passed, and though the water was still rough, the waves were tossing merrily in blue and white under a brilliant sun. The *Petrel* sped along, the silver foam

bubbling up before her prow, and the *Seamew*, as the other boat was named, followed as swiftly.

Peggy leaned back over the stern once more, and holding out her hand to her old schoolmate, gave her slender fingers a squeeze that made her cry out.

"Dear old Vanity," said Peggy; "I forgot how soft your hands always were. But I am so glad to see you, even if I am not going to expire about it. Do tell me how you came here, and where you are staying, and all about it, now that we can hear ourselves speak."

"How did I come here, my dear?" repeated Viola Vincent. "Witchcraft!"

"What do you mean, you foolish thing?"

"My dear, what I say; simply that and nothing more, just like the Raven. Witchcraft! The very minute I get home, I am going to get a pointed black hat and a red cloak, and a crutch-stick. I think they will be quite sweet,

don't you? Don't you think pointed hats are quite sweet, Mr. Merryweather?"

"Pointed hats," replied Phil, gravely, "have always seemed to me the acme of sweetness; that is why they call them sugar-loaf hats, I suppose."

"Oh! Mr. Merryweather, you *are* funny! Oh, I *hoped* you were going to be funny," cried Viola; "you *look* funny, and —"

"Thank you!" said Phil; and "Viola, don't be a goose!" said her brother again.

"I mean it as a compliment!" cried Viola. "Mr. Merryweather, I mean it as the very highest compliment I can pay, I truly do. With such a simply entrancing name as Merryweather, it would be such a dreadful pity to be sober as a judge, you know; though the only judge I know is too frisky for anything. Kittens, my dear, I — I mean, Mr. Merryweather — I *beg* your pardon! are actually *grim* beside Judge Gay; aren't they, Tommy? Did you ever see a grim kitten,

Mr. Merryweather? Wouldn't it be too horrid for anything? Well, but what I meant to say is, the only weeniest speck of a fault I ever had to find with the Snowy — darling thing! — was that she was a little bit — just the tiniest winiest scrap — too serious. If your name were Tombs, you know, or Graves, or Scull, — I knew a girl named Scull, — of course you would have to *be* serious to live up to it; but when your name is Merryweather, you ought to live up to *that*, and so I always told the Snowy."

"I am sure the Snowy was always jolly enough," said Peggy, bluntly, "except when you wanted to get into mischief, Vanity!"

"Yes, but I *always* wanted to get into mischief," replied Viola; "so that made it a little hard for me, Peggy, you must admit it did, especially when I adored the Snowy, and couldn't bear to have her look grave at me. Mr. Merryweather, when the Snowy looked *really* grave at me, it froze my young blood,

just like Hamlet's; didn't it, Peggy? I used to go and sit on the radiator to get thawed out, didn't I, Peggy?"

"Oh, of course," said Peggy, laughing. "But all this time, Vanity, we have not heard about the witchcraft that brought you to this part of the world."

"Oh! so you haven't. Well, now you shall. You see I am eighteen this summer, so Puppa said I should choose where we should go, whether to the mountains, or to Newport, or to this lake, where he knew of a camp he could have. So I thought I would say Newport, on account of my new frills; I had some perfectly heavenly new frills, and of course Newport is the best place to show them. But just as I was going to *say* 'Newport,' *something* made me turn right round and say to come here. I supposed it was partly because of course I knew Puppa hated Newport, and he is such a perfect duck about going there; but now I know that it was

witchcraft, and something inside me, black cats or something, made me know, without knowing anything about it, that you and the Snowy were going to be here, Peggy. So now I am perfectly happy! Oh! Oh! Why, there *is* the Snowy! Oh, Snowy, you darling! It's me! It's Vanity! How *do* you do? Isn't this *too* perfectly entrancing for anything!"

With a graceful turn, Phil brought his boat alongside the wharf, where a group of campers, Gertrude among them, were gathered to receive them. Gertrude had Viola in her arms in a moment, and was welcoming her with a warmth that made the emotional little creature sob with real pleasure and affection.

"Oh, Snowy!" she cried, "I always liked you better than any one else, Snowy. I never thought I was going to see you again."

"My dear, dear little Viola!" cried Gertrude. "Have you dropped from the clouds? Why, this is too good to be true. But you are

wet through! Come in this moment with me, and get on dry things!"

She hurried Viola away to the tents, and Mr. Merryweather took possession of her brother with the same hospitable intent, though Tom Vincent protested that he was "no wetter than was entirely comfortable."

Phil, taking in his sail, turned an expressive eye on his twin, who had come aboard to help him.

"Gee!" he said, thoughtfully. "A new variety, Obadiah! Pollybirdia singularis, as Edward Lear hath it."

"She's mighty pretty!" said Gerald.

"She is that!" said Phil.

CHAPTER XIII.

ABOUT VISITING

"GOOD-BY, Tommy, dear. Be sure to tell Mamma that I thought she would not mind my staying, when Mrs. Merryweather was so perfectly heavenly as to ask me. Be sure to tell her that my skirt is *all* cockled up, so that you could put it in your waistcoat pocket, Tom; and that the *only* way to save it is to press it *damp*, and let it *dry* before I put it on. Tell her that I have got on a dress of the Snowy's that is simply *divine*, — more becoming than anything I ever had on; and that my silk waist has run — oh, tell her it has run *miles*, Tom, so that I can never —"

"There, there, Vi!" cried Tom Vincent, pushing his boat off. "*I* must run, before

you swamp me entirely with messages. I'll come back for you to-morrow, and bring your toggery. Ever so many thanks, everybody. You've been awfully good. I've had a corking time. Good-by!"

The sail filled, the boat swung round, and was soon speeding along the lake, while her owner still waved his cap and looked back to the wharf, where the campers stood, giving back his greeting with hearty good will.

"Nice chap!" said Gerald to Phil.

"Corker!" said Phil to Gerald.

"Nor," added Gerald, turning to look after the girls as they walked back along the slip, "nor is the sororial adjunct totally devoid of attraction. What thinkest, Fergy?"

He shot a quick glance at his brother, and seemed to await his reply with some eagerness.

"I think she's as pretty as a picture," said Phil, soberly.

"You have a nose on your face, if it comes

to that," said Gerald. "At least it passes for one. *Weiter!*"

"I think she's awfully jolly, and all that," said Phil. "Nice, jolly, good-natured girl."

"Granted; she's great fun."

"But," Phil went on, slowly,— "oh, well! you know what I mean. If our girls went on like that, we should be under the painful necessity of ducking them. Now, Peggy— "

He paused and examined the mooring of the boat, critically.

"Now, Peggy," Gerald repeated, jogging him with his elbow. "Always finish a sentence when you can, son. It argues poverty of invention to have to stop in the middle. You can always fall back on 'tooral looral lido,' if you can't think of anything else. What about Peggy?"

"Oh, nothing. Only she is just like the rest of us, and that seems more natural; that's all."

"And 'beyond a doubt we are the people;

and wisdom will perish with us,'" quoted Gerald, his face brightening as he spoke. "'Tis well. Come on, thou antiquated ape, and let us pump out the float."

Meantime the girls had sought their favorite pine parlor, and were deep in talk. *High* would be a more descriptive adjective; for Viola Vincent was the principal talker, and her shrill, clear treble quivered up to the very tree-tops, startling the birds in their nests, and sending the squirrels scampering to and fro with excitement.

"My dear, this is too delicious, simply *too!* I should expire, if I lived here, of pure joy. Oh, Snowy, what a darling you are! Your nose is just as straight as ever, isn't it? Rulers, my dear, are crooked beside it, aren't they? If I had a straight nose, I should pass away from sheer bliss. My nose turns up more every year; it's the only aspiring thing about me. Pothooks are straight by comparison. Isn't it a calamity?"

"Tiptilted like the petal of a flower," said Gertrude, laughing. "I always thought your nose one of your prettinesses, Vanity, and I believe you think so, too."

"Oh! my *dear*, how *can* you?" cried Viola, caressing her little nose, which was certainly piquant and pretty enough to please any one. "You don't really mean it, do you? You just say it to comfort me, don't you? You *are* such a comforting darling! Where did you get that heavenly shade of green, Snowy? I never saw anything so lovely in my life. It is just the color of jade. My dear, I saw some jade bracelets the other day that were simply *made* for you. I wanted to tear them from the girl's arms, and say, 'What are you doing with the Snowy's bracelets?' She was a dump, with a complexion like Doctor Somebody or other's liniment. A person who can wear jade is simply the —"

"Oh, come, Vanity!" said Peggy, good-naturedly. "Come out of the millinery busi-

ness, and tell us about yourself, and about the other girls. What has become of Vex — of Vivia Varnham?"

"My dear! haven't you heard?"

"Not a word! You have never written, you know, since we left school, and she would not be likely to."

"You didn't love each other quite to distraction, did you?" said Viola. "Poor V. V.! she really was the limit sometimes, wasn't she? I never minded her, of course, because I never listened to what she said. Besides, she was like pickles, you know; you just took her with the rest of your dinner, and she didn't make much difference. I used to tell her so. Well, poor V. V.! You never could guess: married, my dear!"

"Married!" echoed Peggy and Gertrude.

"Married! to a missionary; widower, with four children. Gone to China! You need not believe it unless you like; I don't believe it myself, though I saw them married."

"It is hard to believe, Vi!" said Gertrude. "How did it happen?"

"My dear, *the* limit! positively, the boundary line, arctic circle, and that sort of thing. Love at first sight, on both sides. Spectacles, bald, — not the spectacles, but he, — snuffy to a degree! You really never *did!* I was the first person she told. I simply screamed. 'My dear!' I said, 'you *cannot* mean it. You could *not* live with that waistcoat!'

"She told me I was frivolous — which I never attempted to deny — and said I did not understand, which was the truth. She looked really quite sweet in her wedding-dress, and when she went away she was quite softened, she truly was, and wept a little weep, and so did I. You see, Snowy, the very first thing I can remember in my life is V. V.'s breaking my doll over my head. I miss her dreadfully, I do indeed; nobody has been — well, acidulated, to me since she went, and I need the tonic. And speaking of tonics, where is Beef?

where is the Fluffy? You know" — turning to Margaret — "I used to call the Snowy and the Fluffy and the Horny my triple tonic, Beef, Wine, and Iron; and the Fluffy was Beef. Steady and square, you know, and red and brown; exactly like beef; simply *no* difference except the clothes. How is she, Snowy?"

"The Fluffy — Bertha Haughton, you know, Margaret — is teaching in Blankton High School; very busy, very happy, indeed, perfectly absorbed in her work. I have a letter from her in my pocket this minute, that came last night. Would you like to hear it?"

And amid a clamor of eager assent, she drew out the letter and read as follows.

"'Dear Snowy: It is good to hear about all the jolly times at Camp. I wish I could come, but see no way to it just now. Yes, I know school is over, but there are the rank lists to make out, and all kinds of odd end-of-the-year chores to be done; besides, two of my

boys have conditions to work out, — going to college in the fall, — and I am tutoring them. They are two of the dearest boys that ever were, only not very bright, and I have promised to stand by them.' This is the way she behaves, after teaching all the year; she is incorrigible! 'All the others passed without conditions, and three of them got honors, so I am very proud and happy. This has been the best year of all; but then, I say that every year, don't I? I do feel more and more that I am doing the thing in the whole world that I like best to do.'

"The rest is just messages, and so on; but you see how happy she is, and how utterly absorbed."

"My dear, it is *too* amazing!" cried Viola Vincent. "The very thought of teaching makes me simply dissolve with terror; little drops of water, my dear, would be all that would be left of poor Vanity; not a grain of sand to hold her together. Hush! let me tell

you something! Last year I tried to teach a class in Sunday school, — great, terrible boys, taller than I was, — and I *almost* expired, I assure you I did. They never knew their lessons, and two of them made eyes at me, and the rest made faces at each other; it was simply excruciating. Then the rector asked me if I didn't think I could dress more simply; said I set an example, and so on. I told him I was dressed like a broomstick then, as far as simplicity was concerned, and so I was, simply and positively like a broomstick; only my dress — it was a rose-colored foulard, *the* most angelic shade you ever saw, girls; just like a sunset cloud, somebody said — happened to have ruffles to the waist, and ribbons fluttering about more or less. He *said* I fluttered, and I told him I certainly did. 'I always flutter, Mr. Monk,' I said. 'When I don't flutter, I shall be dead.' Which was true. He was quite peevish, but I was firm; you know you *have* to be firm about such things.

Only, the next Sunday he happened to come by when one of those great dreadful boys asked me if Solomon's seal was tame, and I said I didn't think it was. Well, I *didn't!* But he wrote me a note next day, saying he thought teaching was not my *forte*, and perhaps I would like visiting better. I fully agreed with him, so now I visit, and it is simply dandy. I just love it!"

"Tell us about your visiting, Vi!" said Gertrude. "I am going to take it up next winter, and I should like to know how you do it."

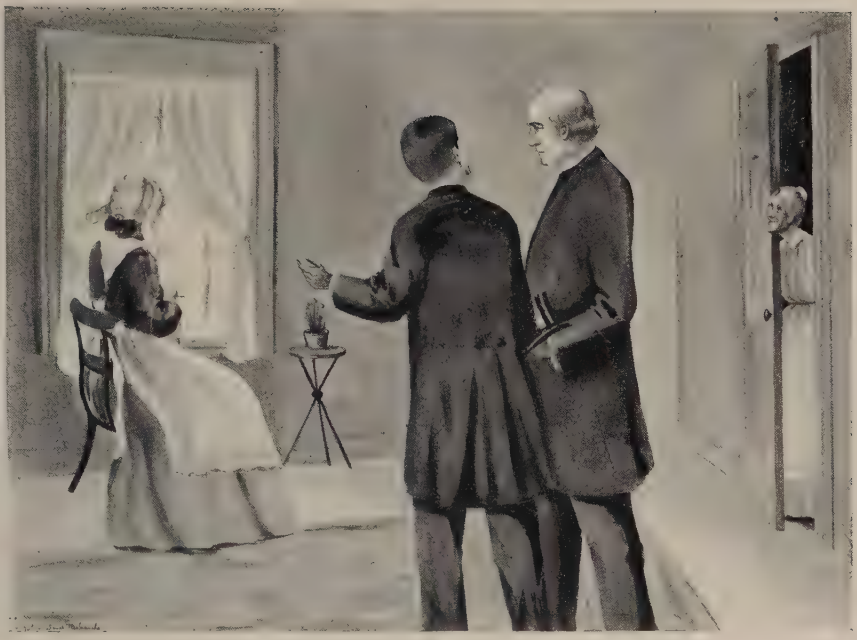
"My dear! Such sport! There are some dear old ladies I go to see, perfect old ducks; in a Home, you know. I go once a week, and I put on *all* my frills, and never wear the same dress twice if I can help it, and I tell them all about the parties I go to, and what I wear, and what my partners are like, and about the suppers, and take them my German favors, and they simply *love* it! Mr. Monk

thinks it's terrible that I don't read them tracts; my dear, they abominate tracts, and so do I; we found that out at once. So I read them the gayest, frilliest little stories I can find, that are really *nice*, and they *adore* it. One day — my *dears!* will you promise never to breathe it if I tell you something? never even to *sneeze* it?"

"We promise! We promise!" cried all the girls.

"Well — hush! It was simply fierce; and *the* greatest sport I ever had in my life. There is one old lady in the Home who is too perfectly sweet for anything. Miss Bathsheba Barry; did you ever hear such a delicious name? She is just my height, and as pretty as a picture in her cap and kerchief. They all wear caps and kerchiefs, and little gray gowns, the most becoming costume you ever saw; I am going into the Home the very minute my looks begin to go, because I *do* look quite — but wait! Hush! not a word! Well!

I had been teasing Miss Barry for ever and ever so long to let me dress up in her things, because I knew they would suit me, and at last, one day, the dear old thing consented. It was the time for the matron's afternoon visit, and she is very jolly, and I wanted to surprise her. So I put on the little gray gown, and the delicious cap, just like Rembrandt's mother, and the white net kerchief — don't you adore white net, Snowy? it softens the face so! — and the apron; and then I went and sat down in Miss Barry's chair by the window, with her knitting, and put on her spectacles — oh! how she did laugh. Then we heard steps, and Miss Barry went into the closet and shut the door all but a crack to peep through, and I turned my head away from the door, and knitted away for dear life. Oh, girls! The door opened, and I heard Mrs. Poddle say, 'This way, gentlemen! This is Miss Barry's room.' *Gentlemen!* My dears, I thought I should



"'SIMPLY FIERCE, YOUR REVERENCE!' SAID I."

pass away! Then there came great, loud men's steps, and I heard Mr. Monk's voice — 'This is one of our most interesting inmates, Bishop! Eighty-seven years old, and as sprightly as a girl. A most pious and exemplary person. Good morning, Miss Barry! How is your rheumatism to-day?'

"'Simply fierce, your reverence!' said I, in a little squeaky voice, as like Miss Barry's as I could make it. I kept my face turned away, and pretended to be counting stitches very hard.

"'Ahem!' said Mr. Monk. I could hear that he was surprised, for, of course, Miss Barry wouldn't say 'simply fierce,' but it slipped out before I knew it.

"'Miss Barry,' he said, 'I have brought Bishop Ballantyne to see you. I am sure you will be glad to receive him.'

"'Oh, I should perfectly *love* to see the Bishop!' I said; because Bishop Ballantyne is simply a duck, an adorable duck; but still

I did not turn round; and I could hear Miss Barry squeaking with laughter in the closet, and it was really getting quite awful. But now Mr. Monk began to suspect something. I believe he thought I had been drinking, or rather that Miss Barry had, poor old dear. He said, in a pretty awful voice: 'What does this mean? Miss Barry, I desire that, if you are unable to rise, you will at least turn round, and receive Bishop Ballantyne in a fitting manner. I cannot conceive — I must beg you to believe, Bishop, that this has never happened before. I am beyond measure distressed. Miss Barry, —'

"And then he stopped, for I turned round. I had to, of course; there was nothing else to do.

"'How do you do, Bishop Ballantyne?' I said. 'Can you tell me whether Solomon's seal was tame or not?'

"For a minute they both stared as if they had seen a ghost; but then the Bishop went

off into a great roar of laughter, and I thought he would laugh himself into fits, and me, too; and the more solemn Mr. Monk looked, the more we laughed; and Miss Barry was cackling like a hen in the closet — oh, it was great, girls, it truly was! At last Mr. Monk had to laugh too, he couldn't help it; it was simply too utter, you know. He said I was enough to break up an entire parish; and the Bishop said he would take me into his, cap and all. And then the matron came back, and Miss Barry came out, and we all stayed to tea, the Bishop and Mr. Monk and I, and had the time of our lives; at least, I did.

"So you see, girls, visiting *can* be the greatest sport in the world, if you only know how to do it. But we all had to promise Mr. Monk and Mrs. Poddle not to tell, because they said it was enough to break up the discipline of the Home, and I suppose it was."

CHAPTER XIV.

MOONLIGHT AGAIN

The evening was showery, and indoor games were the order of it. The first half-hour after the dishes were washed (a task performed to music, all hands joining in the choruses of "John Peel," "Blow, ye winds of morning," etc.) was spent quietly enough, four of the party at parcheesi, the others busy over crokinole and jackstraws; but by and by there was a cry of "Boston!" and instantly boards and counters were put away on their shelf, and the decks cleared for action. The whole party drew their chairs into a circle, and the fun began. A pleasant sight it was to see Mr. Merryweather blindfold in the middle of the circle, calling out the numbers two by two, and trying to catch the flitting figures

as they changed places. A pleasant sight it was to see the young people leaping, crouching, and gliding across the circle, avoiding his outstretched arms with surprising agility.

"Two and Fourteen!" he would cry; and Gerald and Bell would slip from their places, like shadows. Gerald was across in two long, noiseless lopes, while Bell whisked under her father's very hand, which almost closed on her flying skirt; and a shout of "All over!" greeted the accomplishment of the exchange.

"This will never do!" said Mr. Merryweather. "You all have quicksilver in your heels, I believe. Seven and Twelve! Come Seven, come Twelve!"

Seven and Twelve were Jack Ferrers and Peggy, and they came. Jack, gathering his long legs under him, crept on all fours halfway round the circle, and then made a plunge for the chair which Peggy had just vacated. He landed on the edge, and over went chair and Jack into the fireplace with a resounding

crash. This startled Peggy so that she ran directly into Mr. Merryweather's arms, and was caught and firmly held.

"Let me see!" said Mr. Merryweather. "One pigtail! But I believe all you wretched girls dress your hair precisely alike for 'Boston.' Ha! peculiar sleeve-buttons! Now who has buttons like these? Peggy!"

Then it was Peggy's turn to be blindfolded, and a vigorous "*Colin Maillard*" she made, flying hither and thither, and coming within an ace of catching Gerald himself, who was rarely caught. Finally she seized a flying pigtail belonging to Kitty; and so the merry game went on till all were out of breath with running and laughing.

Phil went to the door to breathe the cool air, and came back with the announcement, "All clear overhead, perfectly corking moonlight. Why do we stay indoors?"

"Canoes!" cried the younger Merryweathers; and there was a rush for the door;

but the Chief stopped them with a gesture. "Too late!" he said. "It is nine o'clock now; time you were in bed, Kitty."

"We might sit on the float and sing a little," suggested Mrs. Merryweather.

"The float! The float!" shouted the boys and girls. There was a snatching up of pillows and wraps, and the whole family trooped down to the float, where they established themselves in a variety of picturesque attitudes. Again it was a wonderful night; the late moon was just rising above the dark trees, no longer the full round, but still brilliant enough to fill the world with light.

"This has been a wonderful moon!" said some one.

"Yes," said Gerald; "it is quite the last thing in moons, not the ordinary article at all. We don't have ordinary moons on this pond. Who made that highly intellectual remark?"

"It was I," said Bell, laughing; "and I

maintain, Jerry, that this moon *has* been a very long, and a very — well, a very splendid one. Just think! not a single cloudy evening till this one; and now it clears off in time to give us our moonlight hour before bedtime."

"The harvest moon is always long," said Mr. Merryweather. "Bell is perfectly right, Jerry."

"Strike home!" said Gerald, baring his breast with a dramatic gesture. "Strike home!

"'There's no more moonlight for poor Uncle J.,
For he's gone whar de snubbed niggers go.'"

"I was just going to propose singing," said his mother; "but before we begin, suppose we do honor to this good moon, that has treated us so well. Let every one give a quotation in her honor. I will begin:

"'That orbèd maiden with white fire laden,
Whom mortals call the moon,

Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
By the midnight breezes strewn.'

Shelley. I am a cloud, be it understood!"

"I should hardly have guessed it," said Mr. Merryweather. "My turn? I'll go back to Milton:

"'Now glowed the firmament
With living sapphires; Hesperus, that led
The starry host, rode brightest, till the moon,
Rising in clouded majesty, at length
Apparent queen, unveiled her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw.'"

"Oh, I say!" murmured Gerald; "that is a peach!"

"Jerry," said his mother, plaintively, "have you *no* adjectives, my poor destitute child? I can imagine few things less peach-like than that glorious passage. But never mind! Jack, it is your turn."

"'The gray sea and the long black land,
And the yellow half-moon large and low —'"

said Jack, half under his breath.

"It isn't yellow, and it isn't half," said Gerald. "But never mind, as the Mater says. Margaret, you come next."

Margaret looked up, her face full of tranquil happiness.

"I was thinking," she said, "of some lines from 'Evangeline,' that I have always loved. I say them over to myself every night in this wonderful moon-time:

"'Beautiful was the night. Behind the black wall of the forest,
Tipping its summit with silver, arose the moon. On the river
Fell here and there through the branches a tremulous gleam of the moonlight,
Like the sweet thoughts of love on a darkened and devious spirit.'"

"Peggy, what have you for us?" asked Mrs. Merryweather.

"Oh!" cried poor Peggy, "you know I never can remember poetry, Mrs. Merryweather. I shall have to take to 'Mother Goose.' I know I am terribly prosy — well,

prosaic, then, Margaret; what's the difference? But I can't think of anything except:

"'The Man in the Moon
Came down too soon,' —

and that doesn't go with all these lovely things you have all been saying."

"It gives me mine, though!" said Phil. And he sang, merrily:

"'The Man in the Moon was looking down,
With winking and with blinking frown,
And stars beamed out bright
To look on the night;
The Man in the Moon was looking!'"

"Phil!" cried Gertrude. "How can you? Comic opera is an insult to a moon like this."

"Oh, indeed!" said her brother. "Sorry I spoke. Next time I'll sing it to some other moon, — one of Jupiter's; or the brick one in Doctor Hale's story. Go on, Toots, since you are so superior. It's your turn."

"'Lady, by yonder blessed moon I swear,
That tips with silver all the fruit-tree tops,'"

said Gertrude. "I can't remember the next line."

"What I miss in this game," said Gerald, in a critical tone, "is accuracy. There isn't a fruit-tree on the Point."

"And the moon, of course, limits herself strictly to the point!" said Gertrude, laughing.

"It's more than you do!" retorted her brother. "But a truce to badinage! I go back to prose and 'Happy Thoughts.' 'I say "O moon!" rapturously, but nothing comes of it.'"

"But something shall come of it this time, Jerry," said his mother. "Perhaps we have had enough quotations now. Give us the 'Gipsy Song.'"

Nothing loth, Gerald sang the wild, beautiful song, his sisters humming the accompaniment. Then one song and another was called for, and the night rang with ballad and barcarole, glee and round. There never

seemed to be any limit to the Merryweather repertoire.

Presently Bell whispered to Gertrude; the latter passed the whisper on to Margaret and Peggy. Silently all four girls rose and slipped away, with a word breathed into Mrs. Merryweather's ear, begging her to keep up the singing.

"Where are the girls going?" asked their father.

"They will be back in a moment," said Mrs. Merryweather. "Give us 'Prinz Eugen,' boys; all of you together!"

And out rolled, in booming bass and silvery tenor, the glorious old camp song of the German wars:

"Prinz Eugen, der edle Ritter,
Woll't dem Kaiser wied'rum kriegen
Stadt und Festung Belgerad."

This was a favorite song of the Merryweather boys, and they never knew which verse to leave out, so they generally sang all

nine of them. They did so this time, and finally ended with a prolonged roar of :

"Liess ihm bringen recht zu Peterwardein."

A moment of silence followed. Indeed, none of the singers had any breath left.

"'And silence like a poultice falls,
To heal the blows of sound!'"

quoted Mr. Merryweather. "Hark! what is that?"

Again the sound of singing was heard. This time it came from the direction of the tents. Girl's voices, thrilling clear and sweet on the stillness. The air was even more familiar than that of "Prinz Eugen," one of the sweetest airs that ever echoed to moonlight and the night :

"Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten,
Dass ich so traurig bin;" —

The girls came singing out into the moonlight, hand in hand. They were in bathing-

dress; their long hair floated over their shoulders; their white arms shone in the white light. Instead of coming back to the float, they plunged into the water, and swam, still singing, to a rock that reared a great rounded back from the water. Up on this rock they climbed, and sat them down, shaking off the water in diamond spray; and still their voices rang out, clear and thrilling on the quiet air:

"Die schönste Jungfrau sitzet
Dort oben wunderbar;
Ihr goldnes Geschmeide blitzet,
Sie kämmt ihr goldenes Haar."

"Gee!" muttered Gerald to himself.

"Pretty!" said Mr. Merryweather, taking his pipe from between his teeth. "Miranda, I don't know that I ever saw anything much prettier than that."

His wife made no reply, but her eyes spoke for her. None of the lads could look more eagerly or more joyfully at that lovely pic-

ture. Were not two of the maidens her very own?

Gertrude was facing them as she sang. Her red-gold hair fell like a mantle of glory about her, far below her waist; her arms, clasped behind her head, were like carved ivory; her face was lifted, and the moon shone full on its pure outlines and candid brow. Bell's rosy face was partly in shadow, but her noble voice floated out rich and strong, filling the air with melody. There was no possibility of doubt, to Mrs. Merryweather's mind, which two of the quartette were most attractive. Yet when she said softly to the son who happened to be next her: "Aren't they lovely, Jerry?" he answered, abstractedly, "Isn't she!" and his eyes were fixed, not on stately Gertrude, or stalwart Bell, but on a slender figure between them, that clung timidly to the rock, one hand clasped in Peggy's. Also, it is to be noted that, when the song was over, and Peggy made an exceptionally clean and grace-

"HE WAS STIRRING THE PORRIDGE INDUSTRIOUSLY, WHILE SHE MIXED THE JOHNNY-CAKE."

ful dive off the rock, Phil exclaimed, "Jove! that was a corker!" to which John Ferrers replied, "Yes; the sweetest contralto I ever heard."

"I never heard you sing better than you did last night," said Jack to Bell. It was next morning, and he was stirring the porridge industriously, while she mixed the johnny-cake.

"So glad!" said Bell, simply. "I aim to please. I'd put in a little more water, Jack, if I were you; it's getting too stiff."

Jack poured in the water, and stirred for some minutes in silence. Presently he said: "I heard from those people last night."

"From the Conservatory? Oh, Jack! do tell me! I have been thinking so much about it. Is it all right?"

"I think so," said Jack, slowly. "They offer me two thousand, and there is an excellent chance for private pupils besides; I have decided to accept it."

"Oh, Jack, how splendid! Oh, I am so glad! I knew it would come — the chance — if you only had patience, and you surely have had it. How happy Hilda will be!"

"Yes," said Jack, soberly. "I owe it to Hilda, every bit of it, as I owe several other things. This, for example."

"This?" repeated Bell. "Meaning the porridge?"

She spoke lightly, yet there was an undertone of feeling in her voice.

"The porridge, and all the rest of it," said Jack. "The place, the life, the friends, the happiness, and — you — all!"

It might have been noted that the "all" was added after a moment's pause, as if it were an afterthought.

"Dear Hilda!" said Bell, softly. "We all owe her a very great deal."

"If it had not been for Hildegarde Grahame," said Jack, "I should have grown up a savage."

"Oh! no, you would not, Jack."

"Yes, I should, Bell. When I first came to Roseholme, I was just at the critical time. I adored my father, who was an angel, — too much of one to understand a mere human boy. I came to please him, and at first I didn't get hold of Uncle Tom at all, nor he of me. He thought me an ass, — well, he was right enough there, — and I thought him a bear and a brute. I was on the point of running away and starting out on my own account, my fiddle and I against the world, when I met Hilda, and she changed life from an enemy into a friend."

Bell was silent for a moment; then, "I have often wondered — " she said, and broke off short.

"So have I!" said Jack. "I don't know now why I didn't. Yes, I do, too."

"Why?" asked Bell, her eyes on her mixing-bowl.

"It's hard to put it into words," said Jack,

with a queer little laugh. "I suppose I felt that I never should have had a chance; but — but yet, I am not sure that I should not have tried my luck, even then, if — if something else had not happened to me."

Bell asked no more questions: the johnny-cake seemed to be at a critical point; she stirred assiduously, and Jack, turning to look at her, could see only the tip of a very rosy little ear under the brown, clustering hair.

There was another silence, broken only by the singing of the teakettle and the soft, thick "hub-bubble" of the boiling porridge.

"Bell!" said Jack, presently.

"Yes, Jack."

"I had another letter last night, that I haven't told you about yet."

"From Hilda?"

"No. From the manager of the Arion Quartette. They want me to go on a tour with them in the autumn, before the Con-

servatory opens. It's a great chance, and they offer me twice what I am worth."

"Oh, Jack!" cried Bell, turning her face, shining with pleasure, full on him. "How glorious! how perfectly glorious! Oh! this is great news indeed."

"There is only one difficulty," said Jack. "I have to provide my own accompanist."

"But you can easily do that!" said Bell.

"Can I?" cried Jack Ferrers, dropping the porridge spoon and coming forward, his two hands held out, his brown face in a glow. "Can I, Bell? There is only one accompanist in the world for me, and I want her for life. Can I have her, my dear?"

"Oh, Jack!" cried Bell, and another spoon was dropped.

"Children, you are letting that porridge burn!" cried Mrs. Merryweather, as she hurried into the kitchen a few minutes later.

"Oh, Mammy, I am so sorry!" said Bell, looking up,

> "All kind o' smily round the lips,
> And teary round the lashes."

"Oh, Mammy, I am so glad!" cried Jack Ferrers; and without more ado he kissed Mrs. Merryweather. "I like burnt porridge!" said this young gentleman.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCERNING VARIOUS THINGS

"WHERE are you going, Margaret?" asked Willy.

"Up to the farm. Bell lost one of her knitting-needles, and thought she might have dropped it there; she is up there now, hunting for it, and here it was in my tent all the time. Would you like to come with me, Willy?"

Willy twinkled with pleasure, and fell into step beside her, and the two walked along the pleasant grassy road through the fields, talking busily. They had become great friends, and Willy was never tired of hearing about Basil, who, he declared, "must certainly be a corker."

"I suppose he is, Willy," said Margaret,

with resignation. "There seems nothing else for any nice person to be. Did I tell you how brave he was when a great savage dog attacked our poor puppies? Oh, you must hear that."

The recital of Basil's heroism lasted till they reached the farmhouse, both in a state of high enthusiasm, and Willy filled with ardent longings for attacks by savage dogs, that he might show qualities equal to those of the youthful hero. (N. B. Basil, honest, freckled, and practical, would have been much surprised to hear himself held up as a youthful embodiment of Bayard and the Cid in one.)

"I'll wait for you out here, Margaret," he said, when they came to the door. "No, I don't want to come in; they will tell me how I've grown, and I do get so tired of it. I'll sit on the fence and think; I like to think."

Margaret nodded sympathetically and went in. The door opened directly into a wide,

sunny kitchen, as bright as sunshine and cleanliness could make it. An elderly woman was standing before a great wheel, spinning wool; beside her, Bell, Gertrude, and Peggy stood watching with absorbed attention. All looked up at Margaret's entrance, and the woman, who had a kind, strong face and sweet brown eyes, laid down her shuttle with a smile of welcome.

"I want to know if this is you," she said. "You're quite a stranger, ain't you? I kind o' looked for you when the gals come in."

"I meant to come, Mrs. Meadows, I truly did; but I was tidying up the tent, and I am so slow about it."

"Mrs. Meadows," said Peggy, laughing, "she wipes every nail-head three times a day, and goes over the whole with a microscope when she has finished, to see if she can find a speck of dust."

"Doos she so?" inquired Mrs. Meadows. "I don't hardly dare to ask her to set down

in this room, then. What with the wool flyin' and all, it's a sight, most times."

"Now, Mrs. Meadows!" exclaimed Gertrude. "When you know you are almost as particular as she is! But, Margaret, do you see what we are doing? We are having a spinning lesson. It is *so* exciting! Come and watch."

"I came to bring your knitting-needle," said Margaret. "Look! it was in my tent, just the end of it sticking out of a crack in the floor. If I had not tidied up, in the way you reprobate, Bell, you might never have got it again."

"Oh! yes, somebody would have stepped on it," laughed Bell. "But I confess I am very grateful for this special attack of tidying. Now, Mrs. Meadows, I shall be all ready for that new yarn as soon as you have it spun."

"My land! don't you want I should color it? I was callatin' to color all this lot."

"No, I like this gray mixture so much; it is just the color for the boys' stockings. By the way, have you seen the boys, Mrs. Meadows? I was looking for them everywhere before I came up."

"Let me see, where did I see them boys?" Mrs. Meadows pondered, drawing the yarn slowly through her fingers. "Gerild and Phillup, you mean? They passed through the yard right after dinner, I should say it was, on their velocipedies; going at a great rate, they was. Here's Jacob, mebbe he'll know."

Jacob, massive and comely, in his customary blue overalls, entered, beaming shyly. "Good mornin', ladies!" he said. "Mother treatin' you well?"

"Very well, Jacob!" said Bell. "We are having a spinning lesson, and find it very interesting."

"I want to know. Well, I allers got on without that branch of edication myself,"

said Jacob. He was standing near the door, and the girls noticed that he kept his hands behind him.

"Mother, ain't you give the girls no apples?" he said.

"There!" cried Mrs. Meadows, apologetically. "I never thought on't."

"Now, ain't that a sight!" said Jacob, reprovingly. "I thought I could trust you not to let 'em starve, mother, but yet someways I felt I ought to bring the apples myself. I dono's they're fit to eat, though."

Still beaming shy benevolence, he brought from behind him a basket of beautiful rosy apples, every one of which had evidently been polished with care — and the sleeve of his coat.

"Oh, what perfect beauties!" cried the girls. "Oh, thank you, Jacob!"

"What kind are they?" asked Peggy. "They *are* good!" Peggy never lost a moment in sampling an apple, and her teeth

now met in the firm, crisp flesh with every sign of approval.

"Benoni! about the best fall apple there is, round these parts; that is, for any one as likes 'em crips. Some prefer a sweet apple, but I like a fruit that's got some sperit in it, same as I do folks. Well, I wish you all good appetite; I must be goin' back to my hoein' lesson, I guess."

"Oh! Jacob, have you seen Jerry and Phil, lately?" asked Gertrude.

"No, I ain't. Yes I hev, too. They went rocketin' past me this noon, and give me some sarse as they went, and I give it 'em back. I ain't seen 'em sence. They're up to mischief, wherever they be, you can count on that."

Jacob diffused his smile again, and withdrew. The girls, still eating their apples, turned eagerly to Mrs. Meadows. "Now, Mrs. Meadows," they said, "we must go on with our lesson. Margaret, sit down and

learn with us; you know you want to learn."

"Indeed, I do!" said Margaret. "But I don't think I'd better now, girls. Willy came up with me, and he is waiting for me outside; I promised to look at a nest he has found, and I don't like to disappoint him. May I come some other day, please, Mrs. Meadows?"

"Well, I guess you may!" said Mrs. Meadows. "Sorry to have ye go now, but glad to see ye next time, and so you'll find it nine days in the week, Miss Montfort. Good day to ye, if ye must go."

Margaret shook the good woman's hand, nodded gaily to the girls, and went out, to find Willy sitting patiently on the fence.

"Was I a very long time, Willy?" she asked. "I thought you might have got out of patience and gone home."

"No!" said Willy, soberly. "You were a good while, but then, girls always are. When

a fellow has sisters, you know, he gets used to waiting."

"Oh! indeed!" said Margaret, much amused.

"Yes," said Willy. "I don't think girls have much idea of time, do you?"

"Why, Willy, I don't know that I have ever considered the question. You see, I have always been a girl myself, so perhaps I am not qualified to judge. But — do you think boys have so very much more idea? It seems to me I know some one who has been late for tea several times this week."

Willy looked conscious. "Well," he said, "I know; but that is different. When you are late for tea, — I mean when a boy is, — he is generally doing something that he wants very much indeed to get through with, fishing, or splicing a bat, or something that really has to be done. Besides, he knows they won't wait tea for him, so it doesn't make any difference."

"I see!" said Margaret. "And girls are never doing anything important. Aren't you rather severe on us, Willy?"

Willy was about to reassure her kindly, for he was extremely fond of her; but at this moment a cheery "Hallo!" was heard, and the twins rode up on their bicycles, bright-eyed and flushed after a fine spurt.

"Neck and neck!" said Gerald. "Margaret, I hope you don't object to being a winning-post. That was a great run."

"Where have you been?" asked Margaret, as the two dismounted and walked along on either side of her.

"Over to the Corners, to send a telegram for the Pater. And thereby hangs a tale."

"May we hear it? We love a tale, don't we, Willy?"

Willy did not look particularly enthusiastic, but he murmured something, which Gerald did not wait to hear.

"Well, the Pater desired to send a telegram,

even winged words, to that man who has been trying to send us shellac for the last three weeks, and who has, we fear, broken down from the strain. A neat despatch it was: 'Send to-morrow, or not at all. — M. Merryweather.' Well, we had just sent it, when we heard some one behind us say, '*Oh*, gosh!' in a tone of such despair that we turned round to see if it was the shellac man in person. It was little Bean, the pitcher of the Corners team, all dressed up in his base-ball togs, scarlet breeches and blue shirt, quite the bird of paradise, and reading a yellow telegram, and his face black as thunder. He was an impressionist study, wasn't he, Fergy? We asked what was up, or rather down, for elevation had no part in him. It appeared that a match was on for this afternoon, between the Baked Beans and the Sweet Peas, the Corners and the Spruce Point team. The Beans were all here except the pitcher and first-baseman, brothers, who were

to come over by themselves, as they lived at some distance from the rest of the team ; and this telegram conveyed the cheering information, that, instead of coming over, they had come down with mumps, and were, in point of fact, in their little beds."

"Oh, what a shame!" said Margaret. "Poor lads! and mumps are such a distressing thing."

"I rejoice to see that you also get your singular and plural mixed in regard to mumps," said Gerald. "You are human, after all. But to tell the truth, I don't know that sympathy with the mumpers was the prevailing sentiment at the Corners."

"Gee! I should think not," said Phil. "This was the match of the season, you see, Margaret. The farmers had come from far and near, and brought their wives and babies; and the Corner fellows had got this gorgeous uniform made, and bought out all the red flannel in the county; and here were

these two wretched chumps down with mumps."

"Oh! but Phil," cried Margaret, "they didn't do it on purpose, poor things; and think how they were suffering! You are heartless, I think."

"They would have suffered more if the Baked Beans had got hold of them," said Phil, with a grin; "or the other fellows either, for that matter. But as it turned out, it was the best thing that could have happened for the Beans. He wasn't much of a pitcher."

"What do you mean?" asked Willy, beginning to be interested. "Did they get another pitcher?"

"Did they? Well, I should remark! I let on in a casual way that the former pitcher of a certain college team was not more than a hundred miles from the spot at that moment. You should have seen that fellow's face, Margaret. It really was a study. Perfect be-

wilderment for a minute, and then — well, I believe he would have gone down on all fours and carried Jerry to the field if he would not have gone in any other way."

"Oh! please, Phil. I am bewildered, too. Is Gerald a — a pitcher?"

"Is he? My child, he is the great original North American jug."

"Oh, pooh!" said Gerald. "Don't be an ass, Ferguson! You are as good a first-baseman as I am pitcher, any day. Of course we were glad to help them out, though I drew the line at scarlet breeches. My mother's angry shade hovered above me and forbade.

> "'Go fight in fortune's deepest ditches,
> But oh, avoid the scarlet breeches!'

I could hear her say it. So I told him that my hair and my temper were the only red I ever wore, and he submitted, though sadly. So we played; and it was a great game. And we smote them hip and thigh, even to the going down of the sun; or would have, if

the day had been shorter. Phil made three runs, Will."

"Jerry made three more Will," said Phil; "and pitched like one o'clock, I tell you. I never saw you play better, Obadiah. Those last balls were perfect peaches. I wish you had seen the game, Margaret."

"So do I," said Margaret. "I have never seen a game of baseball."

"Oh! I say!" cried Phil and Willy. "What a shame!"

"Where do you live?" asked Willy, in such open wonder and commiseration that the others all laughed.

"She lives in an enchanted castle, Willy," said Gerald; "with a magician who keeps her in chains — of roses and pearls. He has two attendant spirits who help to keep her in durance that is not precisely vile. How is Mrs. Cook, Margaret? Do you know, you have hardly told me anything about Fernley all this time? I want to know ever so many

things. What became of the pretty lady whose house was burned? Do you remember that? I never shall forget it as long as I live."

"Indeed, I do!" said Margaret, blushing. "She is still abroad, Gerald. I doubt if she ever returns, or at least not for a long time. She is well, and really happy, I think. Isn't it wonderful?"

"You didn't see Miss Wolfe come down the ladder!" said Gerald. "That was the most wonderful thing I ever saw. Just as she stepped out on the window-sill, the fire caught the hem of her skirt. I thought she was gone that time. I was just going to drop you and run, when she stooped and squeezed the skirts together — woollen skirts, fortunately — and put it out; and then came swinging down that rope to the ladder, and down the ladder to the ground, as if she had been born in a circus. I tell you, that was something to see. Pity you missed it."

"Why did she miss it?" asked Willy.

"And what do you mean by dropping her, Jerry?"

Gerald, whose eyes were shining with the excitement of recollection, turned and looked down at his small brother as if suddenly recalling his existence.

"Margaret was — busy!" he said, briefly. "And, I say, Father William, don't you want to take my biky down and give him a feed of oats? he is hungry. See him paw the ground!" and he gave the bicycle a twirl.

"I must go," said Phil, remounting his own. "Come along, Willy, and I'll race you to Camp."

But for once Willy held back. "I was going to take Margaret to see a redwing's nest," he said. "I promised her I would."

"Oh! Margaret will excuse you," said Phil. "Won't you, Margaret? Redwings' nests always look better in the morning, besides. Come on, boy, and I'll tell you all about the game."

Willy still hesitated, looking at Margaret; and she in her turn hesitated, blushing rosy red. "Don't let me keep you, Willy dear," she said. "If you would like to hear about the game —"

"*Go on*, young un!" said Gerald, in a tone of decision so unlike his usual bantering way, that Willy stared, then yielded; and slowly mounting the bicycle, started off with Phil along the road.

They rode for some time in silence, Phil being apparently lost in thought.

"Well!" said Willy at last, in an injured tone.

"Well, what is it, Belted Will?"

"I thought you were going to tell me about the game," said Willy, moodily. "I say, Phil! I think it was awfully rude of you and Jerry to yank me off that way, when I had promised Margaret to take her somewhere, and we were going straight there when you came along and broke in. I don't

think that's any kind of way to do, and I am sure Ma would say so, too. What do you suppose Margaret thinks of me now?"

"Ri tum ti tum ti tido!" carolled Phil. "What do I suppose she thinks of you, Belted One? Why, she thinks you are one of the nicest boys she ever saw; and so you are, when not in doleful dumps. See here, old chap! you'll be older before you are younger, and some day you will know a hawk from a handsaw, *or* hernshaw, according to which reading of 'Hamlet' you prefer. And now as to this game!"

He plunged into a detailed account of the great match, and soon Willy's eyes were sparkling, and his cheeks glowing, and he had forgotten all about Margaret and the redwing's nest.

But as they crested the hill, which on the other side dipped down to the camp, Phil glanced back along the road. Margaret and

Gerald were walking slowly, deep in talk, and did not see the wave of his hand. "Heigh, ho!" said Phil; but he smiled even while he sighed.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE DOWN

One afternoon, when most of the campers were off fishing, Margaret wandered alone up to the top of the great down behind the camp. Thoroughly in love with the camp life as she was, in most of its aspects, she could not learn to care for fishing. To sit three, four, five hours in a boat, on the chance of killing a harmless and beautiful creature, did not, she protested, appeal to her; and many a lively argument had she had on the subject with Bell and Gertrude, who were ardent fisher-maidens.

"But, Margaret, it is the sport!" Bell would cry. "It isn't just killing, it is sport!"

"But, Bell, if the sport does not amuse

me!" Margaret would answer. "If I want to kill something, I would rather kill spiders, though I am trying not to be so afraid of them — or mosquitoes."

Then the girls would cry out that she was hopeless, and would gather up their reels and rods and leave her to her own peaceful devices, having even the generosity not to twit her with inconsistency when she enjoyed her delicately-fried perch at supper.

These solitary afternoons were sure to be pleasant ones for Margaret. She loved the merry companionship of the campers, but she loved, too, to wander through the woods, among the great straight-stemmed pines and dark feathery hemlocks, or to track the little clear brook through its windings, from the great bog to its outlet into the lake; or, as now, to stroll about over the great down, looking down on the blue water below.

It was a perfect afternoon. Little white clouds drifted here and there over the tops of

the wooded hills, but they only made the sky more deeply and intensely blue. There was just enough breeze to ripple the water so that it caught every sunbeam, and set it dancing on the tremulous surface. Below her a fish-hawk poised and dipped, seeking his dinner; far out, two black specks showed where her friends were at their "sport." Margaret drew a long breath of content.

"Oh, pleasant place!" she said. "How glad I am that I am not in that boat. Oh, pleasant place!"

She looked about her with happy eyes. Before her, the earth fell away in an abrupt descent to the lake, steep enough to be dignified by the name of precipice; but behind and on either hand it rolled away in billowy slopes of green, crowned here and there with patches of wood, and crossed by irregular lines of stone wall.

"Oh, pleasant place!" said Margaret a third time. "How many beautiful places I

know! What a wonderful world of beauty it is!"

Her mind went back to Fernley House, the beloved home where she lived with her uncle John Montfort: to the rose-garden, where they loved to work together, the sunny lawns, the shady alleys of box and laurel, the arbors of honeysuckle and grape-vine. She could almost see the beloved uncle, pruning-knife in hand, bending over his roses; if only he did not cut back the Ramblers too far! She could almost see her little cousins, her children, as she called them, Basil and Susan D., running about with their butterfly-nets, shouting and calling to each other. Did they think of her, as she hourly thought of them? Did Uncle John miss her? She must always miss him, no matter how happy she might be with other friends. A wave of homesickness ran through her, and brought the quick tears to her eyes; but she brushed them away with an indignant little shake of her head.

"Goose!" she said. "When will you learn that it is a physical impossibility to be in two places at once? You don't want to leave this beautiful place and these dear people yet? Of course, you don't! Well, then, don't behave so! But all the same, it would be good to hear Uncle John's voice!"

At this moment she heard, — not the beloved voice for which she longed, — but certainly a sound, breaking the stillness of the afternoon; a sound made neither by wind nor water. It did not sound like a bird, either; nor — a beast?

"Oh, to be sure!" thought Margaret. "It may be a sheep. I saw the flock up there this morning. Of course, it is a sheep."

The sound came again, louder this time, and nearer; something between a snorting and a blowing; it must be a very large sheep to make such a loud noise.

Margaret turned to look behind her; but it was not a sheep that she saw.

Just behind the rock on which she was sitting the land rose in a high, green shoulder, on the farther side of which it sloped gradually down to a little valley. Over this shoulder now appeared — a head! A head five times as big as that of the biggest sheep that ever bore fleece; a head crowned by long, sharp, dangerous-looking horns. And now, as Margaret sat transfixed with terror, another head appeared, and another, and still another; till a whole herd of cattle stood on the ridge looking down at her.

Jet black, of colossal size, with gleaming eyes and quivering nostrils, they were formidable creatures to any eyes; but to poor Margaret's they were monsters as terrible as griffin or dragon. All cattle, even the mildest old Brindle that ever stood to be milked, were objects of dire alarm to her, but she had never seen animals like these. Tales of the wild cattle of Chillingham, of the fierce herds that roam the Western prairies and the pampas

of the South, rushed to her mind. She felt fear stealing over her, a wild, unreasoning panic which neither strength nor reason could resist. She dared not move; she dared not cry out for help; indeed, who was there to hear if she did cry? She sat still on her rock, her hands clasped together, her eyes, wide with terror, fixed on the enemy.

The leader of the herd met her gaze with one which to her excited fancy seemed threatening and sinister. For a moment he stood motionless; then, tossing his head with its gleaming horns, and uttering another loud snort, he took a step toward her; the rest followed. Another step and another. Margaret glanced wildly around her. On one side was the precipice, on either hand a wide stretch of open meadow; no hope of escape. She must meet her death here, then, alone, with no human eye to see, no human hand to help her in her extremity. She crouched down on the rock, and covered her eyes with her hands.

The cattle drew nearer. Snuffing the air, tossing their horns, with outstretched necks and eager eyes, step by step they advanced. Now they were close about her, their giant forms blocking the sunlight, their gleaming eyes fixed upon her. Margaret felt her senses deserting her; but suddenly — hark! another sound fell on her ear; a sound clear, resonant, jubilant; the sound of a human voice, singing:

> "I'm an honest lad, though I be poor,
> And I niver was in love afore —"

"*Gerald!*" cried Margaret. "Gerald, help!" and she dropped quietly off the rock, under the very feet of the black cattle.

When she came to herself, she was propped against the rock, and Gerald was fanning her with his cap and gazing at her with eyes of anxiety and tenderness, which yet had a twinkle in their depths.

"Better?" he asked, as he had asked once

before under somewhat similar circumstances. "Do say you are better, please! The house isn't on fire this time, and neither is the Thames."

Margaret struggled into a sitting posture. "Oh! Gerald," she said, "I am so ashamed! You will think I am always fainting, and, indeed, I never have in all my life except these two times. But they were so terrible — ah! there they are still."

Indeed, the herd of cattle was standing near, still gazing with gleaming eyes; but, somehow, the look of ferocity was gone. She could even see — with Gerald beside her — that they were noble-looking creatures.

"Oh, no!" said Gerald. "Don't call them terrible; you will hurt their poor old feelings. I know them of old, Horatio; fellows of infinite jest."

"Are they — are they tame?" asked Margaret, in amazement.

"Tame? I should say so. Look at this

fellow! I have known him from a calf. Did um want um's nosy rubbed?" he added, addressing the huge leader, who was snuffing nearer and nearer. "Come along, then, Popolorum Tibby, and tell um's prettiest aunt not to be afraid of um any more."

"But — but they came all around me!" said poor Margaret.

"Small blame to them! Showed their good sense, not to say their taste. But to be wholly candid, they came for salt."

"For salt? Those great monsters?"

"To be sure! Ellis, the farmer, makes regular pets of them, and I always put a lump of salt in my pocket when I am coming their way. I never saw them in this pasture before, though; the fence must be broken. I believe I have some grains of salt left now. See him take it like a lady!"

He held out his hand, with a little heap of salt in it. The huge ox came forward, stepping daintily, with neck outstretched and

nostrils spread; put out a tongue like a pink sickle, and neatly, with one comprehensive lick, swept off every particle of salt, and looked his appreciation.

Gerald patted the great muzzle affectionately.

"Good old Blunderbore!" he said. "I almost carried you when you were a day old, though you may not believe it. Come, Margaret, give him a pat, and say you bear no malice."

Margaret put out a timid hand and patted the great black head. Blunderbore snuffed and blew, and expressed his friendliness in every way he could.

"Why, he is a dear, gentle creature!" said the girl. "I shall never be afraid of him again. And yet — oh, Gerald, I am so glad you came!"

"So am I!" said Gerald.

"Because," Margaret went on, "of course, I see how silly and foolish I was; but all the

same, I was terribly frightened, and I really don't know what would have become of me if you had not come, Gerald."

"But I did come, Margaret! I will always come, whenever you want me, if it is across the world."

"But — you must think me so *very* silly, Gerald!"

"Do you wish to know what I think of you?" asked Gerald.

Margaret was silent.

"Because, for the insignificant sum of two cents, I would tell you," he went on.

"I haven't two cents with me," said Margaret. "I think it is time to go home now, Gerald."

"Generosity is part of my nature," said Gerald; "I'll tell you for nothing. Margaret — sit down, please!"

Margaret had risen to her feet. The words had the old merry ring, but a deep note quivered in his voice. The girl was afraid,

she knew not of what; afraid, yet with a fear that was half joy. "I — I must go, Gerald, indeed!" she said, faintly.

"You must not go," said Gerald, gravely. "It is not all play, Margaret, between you and me. My cap and bells are off now, and you must hear what I have to say."

Margaret, still hesitating, looked up in his face, and saw something there that brought the sweet color flooding over her neck and brow, so swift and hot that instinctively she hid her face in her hands.

But gently, tenderly, Gerald Merryweather drew the slender hands away, and held them close in his own.

"My dearest girl," said the young man, "my dearest love, you are not afraid of me? Sit down by me; sit down, my Margaret, and let me tell you what my heart has been saying ever since the day I first saw you."

So dear Margaret sat down, perhaps because she could hardly stand, and listened.

And the black cattle listened, too, and so did the fish-hawk overhead, and the little birds peeping from their nest in the birch wood close at hand; but none of them ever told what Gerald said.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SNOWY OWL

"I THINK it is a horrid bother, if you want to know!" said Willy.

"Willy Merryweather! aren't you ashamed of yourself? I never heard anything so odious, when we are all so happy, and everything is so perfectly lovely. I don't see what you mean."

"I don't care, it *is* a bother. Nothing is the way it used to be; it's all nothing but spooning, all over the lot."

"I should not think you would use vulgar expressions, anyhow, Willy."

"'Spooning' isn't vulgar," said Willy, sulkily. "I've heard Pa say it, so there! And — look here, Kitty! Of course, it's all corking, and so on, and anyhow, girls like that

kind of fuss; but it does spoil everything, I tell you. Why, Pa couldn't get a crew for the war canoe yesterday. He wanted to go to Pine Cove — at least I did, awfully, and he said all right, so we would; and then Jerry was off with Margaret in the *Keeway-din*, and Bell and Jack were out in the woods fiddling, and Peggy and Phil — I say, Kitty! You don't suppose *they* are going to get spoony, do you?"

Kitty looked very wise, and pursed her lips and nodded her head with an air of deep mystery.

"You don't!" repeated Willy, looking aghast.

"Hush, Willy!" said Kitty. "Don't say a word! don't breathe it to anybody! I hope — I *think* they are!"

"What a mean, horrid shame!" cried Willy, indignantly. "I do think it is disgusting."

His sister turned on him with flashing eyes. "It is you that is the shame!" she cried. "It

is you who ought to be ashamed, Willy. Do you want poor Phil to be all alone when Jerry is married? Do you know that twins sometimes pine away and *die*, Willy Merryweather, when the other of them dies?"

"Jerry isn't going to die," said Willy, uncomfortably. "What nonsense you talk, Kitty."

"Well, marries. I should think very likely they would, then, if they didn't get married themselves. I think you are perfectly heartless, Willy. And dear Peggy, too, so nice and jolly! and if she goes away back out West *without* falling in love with Phil, we may never, never see her again; and she has promised me a puppy of the very next litter Simmerimmeris has. So there!"

Willy was silent for a moment, kicking the pebbles thoughtfully.

"Do you think she is — that?" he asked at length, shamefacedly.

"Of course I don't *know!*" said Kitty, judi-

cially. "Of course very likely nothing is positively decided yet; but I am sure she likes him very, very much, and he takes her out whenever he has a chance."

"There's nobody else for him to take out," put in Willy; "the others are all spoon—"

"Willy, don't be tiresome! and just think! if they should get married and go to live out West, then you and I could both go out to see them, and ride all the ponies, and punch the cows, and have real lassoes, and — and —"

The children were coming home through the wood. Kitty's voice had gradually risen, till now it was a shrill squeak of excitement; but at this moment it broke off suddenly, for there was a rustling of branches, and the next moment Gertrude stood before them with grave looks.

"My dear chicks," she said, "you must not talk so loud. I was in the pine parlor, and could not help hearing the last part of what you were saying. And anyhow, I would not

talk about such things, if I were you. Suppose Peggy had been with me! How do you think she would have felt? Mammy would not like to have you gossiping in this foolish way."

The children hung their heads.

"Oh! Toots," said Kitty, "I am sorry! I didn't realize that we were getting anywhere near the house. We were only thinking — at least I was — how lovely it would be if Peggy and Phil should — "

"Kitty dear, hush!" said Gertrude, decidedly. "You would better not think, and you certainly *must not* talk, about anything of the kind. There are enough real love-affairs to interest you, you little match-maker, without your building castles in the air. Let Peggy and Phil alone!"

"I should think there were!" said Willy. "That's just what I was saying, Toots; it's nothing but spooning, all over the place. There's no fun anywhere; this wretched

love-making spoils everything. *I* think it's perfectly childish."

"Do you, Willy dear?" said his sister; and her smile was very sweet as she laid her hand on the boy's shoulder.

"Yes, I do. Here are the white perch rising like a house afire, and I can't get a soul to go with me. It was just the same yesterday, and it's like that almost every day now."

"Oh, Willy! I'll go with you," cried Kitty, eagerly. "Why didn't you tell me the perch were rising? Let's come right along this minute. Toots will help us with the boat, won't you, Toots?"

"Yes, I'll help!" said the Snowy Owl.

Ten minutes later the white boat was speeding on her way to the fishing-ground, the little rowers bending to their oars, chattering merrily as they went.

"That's one comfort!" Willy was saying. "We've got Toots. Nobody will get her away from us."

"I should hope not," said Kitty. "There's nobody good enough, in the first place; and besides, of course somebody must stay with Papa and Mamma."

"I suppose you will be grown up yourself some day!" said Willy, gruffly.

"I shall be likely to marry very young," said Kitty, seriously. "I heard Aunt Anna say so."

Gertrude stood on the wharf, looking after the retreating boat. "Poor Willy!" she said, with a smile; "it *is* hard on him!"

She looked around her. It was afternoon, a still, golden day. The lake was as she loved best to see it, a sheet of living crystal, here deep blue, here glittering in gold and diamonds, here giving back shades of crimson and russet from the autumn woods that crowded down to the water's edge. Far out, her eye caught a white flash, the gleam of a paddle; there was another, just at the bend of the shore; and was that dark spot the prow

of a third canoe, moored in the fairy cove of Birch Island? Gertrude smiled again, and her smile said many things.

Presently she raised her arms above her head, and brought them down slowly, with a powerful gesture. "How good it would be to fly!" she said, dreamily. "To fly away up to the iceberg country, where the snowy owls live!"

She stood for a long time silent, gazing out over the shining water. At last she shook herself with a little laugh, and turned away. The white canoe, her own especial pet, was lying on the wharf. She launched it carefully, then taking her paddle, knelt down in the bow. A few long, swift strokes, and the canoe shot out over the lake, and rested like a great white bird with folded wings, then glided slowly on again. It was a pity there was none to see, for the picture was a fair one: the stately maiden kneeling, her golden hair sweeping about her, her white arms ris-

ing and falling slowly, rhythmically, in perfect grace.

"Tu-whoo!" said the Snowy Owl.

But only the loon answered her.

THE END.

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